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THE MONK & THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER

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THE MONK AND THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER

by

AMBROSE BIERCE

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PREFACE

MANY years ago – probably in 1890 – Dr. Gustav Adolf Danziger brought to me in San Francisco what he said was a translation by himself of a German story by that brilliant writer, Herr Richard Voss, of Heidelberg. As Dr. Danziger had at that time a most imperfect acquaintance with the English language, he asked me to rewrite his version of Herr Voss's work for publication in this country. In reading it I was struck by what seemed to me certain possibilities of amplification, and I agreed to do the work if given a free hand by both author and translator. To this somewhat ill-considered proposal, which I supposed would make an end of the matter, I was afterward assured that the author, personally known to the translator, had assented. The result was this book, published by F. J. Schulte & Company of Chicago. Almost coincidently in point of time the publishers failed, and it was, so far as I know, never put upon the market.

Never having seen the original story, and having no skill in German anyhow, I am unable to say what liberties Dr. Danziger may have taken with his author's text; to me he professed to have taken none; yet, in recent books of his he is described on the title pages as 'Author of The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter' – a statement that seems to justify, if not compel, this brief account of a matter which, though not particularly

important, has given rise to more discussion than I have cared to engage in.

By a merely literary artifice the author of the German tale professed to have derived it from another writing, and in the Schulte version appeared the note following:

'The foundation of this narrative is an old manuscript originally belonging to the Franciscan monastery at Berchtesgaden, Bavaria. The manuscript was obtained from a peasant by Herr Richard Voss, of Heidelberg, from whose German version this is an adaptation.'

I have always felt that this was inadequate acknowledgment of the work of Herr Voss, for whom I have the profoundest admiration. Not the least part of my motive and satisfaction in republishing lies in the opportunity that it supplies for doing justice to one to whose splendid imagination the chief credit of the tale is due. My light opinion of the credit due to any one else is attested by my retention of Dr. Danziger's name on the title page. In this version the work that came into my hands from his has been greatly altered and extended.

AMBROSE BIERCE

THE MONK AND THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER

WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH
G. A. DANZIGER

THE MONK AND THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER

*

I

On the first day of May in the year of our Blessed Lord 1680, the Franciscan monks Ægidius, Romanus and Ambrosius were sent by their Superior from the Christian city of Passau to the Monastery of Berchtesgaden, near Salzburg. I, Ambrosius, was the strongest and youngest of the three, being but twenty-one years of age.

The Monastery of Berchtesgaden was, we knew, in a wild and mountainous country, covered with dismal forests, which were infested with bears and evil spirits; and our hearts were filled with sadness to think what might become of us in so dreadful a place. But since it is Christian duty to obey the mandates of the Church, we did not complain, and were even glad to serve the wish of our beloved and revered Superior.

Having received the benediction, and prayed for the last time in the church of our Saint, we tied up our cowls, put new sandals on our feet, and set out, attended by the blessings of all. Although the way was long and perilous, we did not lose our hope, for hope is not only the beginning and the end of religion, but also the strength of youth and the support of age. Therefore our hearts soon forgot the sadness of parting, and

rejoiced in the new and varying scenes that gave us our first real knowledge of the beauty of the earth as God has made it. The colour and brilliance of the air were like the garment of the Blessed Virgin; the sun shone like the Golden Heart of the Saviour, from which streameth light and life for all mankind; the dark blue canopy that hung above formed a grand and beautiful house of prayer, in which every blade of grass, every flower and living creature praised the glory of God.

As we passed through the many hamlets, villages and cities that lay along our way, the thousands of people, busy in all the vocations of life, presented to us poor monks a new and strange spectacle, which filled us with wonder and admiration. When so many churches came into view as we journeyed on, and the piety and ardour of the people were made manifest by the acclamations with which they hailed us and their alacrity in ministering to our needs, our hearts were full of gratitude and happiness. All the institutions of the Church were prosperous and wealthy, which showed that they had found favour in the sight of the good God whom we serve. The gardens and orchards of the monasteries. and convents were well kept, proving the care and industry of the pious peasantry and the holy inmates of the cloisters. It was glorious to hear the peals of bells announcing the hours of the day: we actually breathed music in the air – the sweet tones were like the notes of angels singing praise to the Lord.

Wherever we went we greeted the people in the name of our patron Saint. On all sides were manifest humility and joy: women and children hastened to the wayside, crowding about us to kiss our hands and beseech a blessing. It almost seemed as if we were no longer poor servitors of God and man, but lords and masters of this whole beautiful earth. Let us, however, not grow proud in spirit, but remain humble, looking carefully into our hearts lest we deviate from the rules of our holy Order and sin against our blessed Saint.

I, Brother Ambrosius, confess with penitence and shame that my soul caught itself upon exceedingly worldly and sinful thoughts. It seemed to me that the women sought more eagerly to kiss my hands than those of my companions – which surely was not right, since I am not more holy than they; besides, am younger and less experienced and tried in the fear and commandments of the Lord. When I observed this error of the women, and saw how the maidens kept their eyes upon me, I became frightened, and wondered if I could resist should temptation accost me; and often I thought, with fear and trembling, that vows and prayer and penance alone do not make one a saint; one must be so pure in heart that temptation is unknown. Ah me!

At night we always lodged in some monastery, invariably receiving a pleasant welcome. Plenty of food and drink was set before us, and as we sat at table the monks would crowd about, asking for news of the

great world of which it was our blessed privilege to see and learn so much. When our destination was learned we were usually pitied for being doomed to live in the mountain wilderness. We were told of ice-fields, snow-crowned mountains and tremendous rocks, roaring torrents, caves and gloomy forests; also of a lake so mysterious and terrible that there was none like it in the world. God be with us!

On the fifth day of our journey, while but a short distance beyond the city of Salzburg, we saw a strange and ominous sight. On the horizon, directly in our front, lay a bank of mighty clouds, with many grey points and patches of darker hue, and above, between them and the blue sky, a second firmament of perfect white. This spectacle greatly puzzled and alarmed us. The clouds had no movement; we watched them for hours and could see no change. Later in the afternoon, when the sun was sinking into the west, they became ablaze with light. They glowed and gleamed in a wonderful manner, and looked at times as if they were on fire!

No one can imagine our surprise when we discovered that what we had mistaken for clouds was simply earth and rocks. These, then, were the mountains of which we had heard so much, and the white firmament was nothing else than the snowy summit of the range – which the Lutherans say their faith can remove. I greatly doubt it.

2

When we stood at the opening of the pass leading into the mountains we were overcome with dejection; it looked like the mouth of Hell. Behind us lay the beautiful country through which we had come, and which now we were compelled to leave forever; before us frowned the mountains with their inhospitable gorges and haunted forests, forbidding to the sight and full of peril to the body and the soul. Strengthening our hearts with prayer and whispering anathemas against evil spirits, we entered the narrow pass in the name of God, and pressed forward, prepared to suffer whatever might befall.

As we proceeded cautiously on our way giant trees barred our progress and dense foliage almost shut out the light of day, the darkness being deep and chill. The sound of our footfalls and of our voices, when we dared to speak, was returned to us from the great rocks bordering the pass, with such distinctness and so many repetitions, yet withal so changed, that we could hardly believe we were not accompanied by troops of invisible beings who mocked us and made a sport of our fears. Great birds of prey, startled from their nests in the treetops and the sides of the cliffs, perched upon high pinnacles of rock and eyed us malignly as we passed; vultures and ravens croaked above us in hoarse and

savage tones that made our blood run cold. Nor could our prayers and hymns give us peace; they only called forth other fowl and by their own echoes multiplied the dreadful noises that beset us. It surprised us to observe that huge trees had been plucked out of the earth by the roots and hurled down the sides of the hills, and we shuddered to think by what powerful hands this had been done. At times we passed along the edges of high precipices, and the dark chasms that yawned below were a terrible sight. A storm arose, and we were half-blinded by the fires of heaven and stunned by thunder a thousand times louder than we had ever heard. Our fears were at last worked up to so great a degree that we expected every minute to see some devil from Hell leap from behind a rock in our front, or a ferocious bear appear from the undergrowth to dispute our progress. But only deer and foxes crossed our path, and our fears were somewhat quieted to perceive that our blessed Saint was no less powerful in the mountains than on the plains below.

At length we reached the bank of a stream whose silvery waters presented a most refreshing sight. In its crystal depths between the rocks we could see beautiful golden trout as large as the carp in the pond of our monastery at Passau. Even in these wild places Heaven had provided bountifully for the fasting of the faithful.

Beneath the black pines and close to the large lichen-covered rocks bloomed rare flowers of dark blue and

golden yellow. Brother Ægidius, who was as learned as pious, knew them from his herbarium and told us their names. We were delighted by the sight of various brilliant beetles and butterflies which had come out of their hiding-places after the rain. We gathered handfuls of flowers and chased the pretty winged insects, forgetting our fears and prayers, the bears and evil spirits, in the exuberance of our joy.

For many hours we had not seen a dwelling nor a human being. Deeper and deeper we penetrated the mountain region; greater and greater became the difficulties we experienced in forest and ravine, and all the horrors of the wilderness that we had already passed were repeated, but without so great an effect upon our souls, for we all perceived that the good God was preserving us for longer service to His holy will. A branch of the friendly river lay in our course, and, approaching it, we were delighted to find it spanned by a rough but substantial bridge. As we were about to cross I happened to cast my eyes to the other shore, where I saw a sight that made my blood turn cold with terror. On the opposite bank of the stream was a meadow, covered with beautiful flowers, and in the centre a gallows upon which hung the body of a man! The face was turned toward us, and I could plainly distinguish the features, which, though black and distorted, showed unmistakable signs that death had come that very day.

I was upon the point of directing my companions' attention to the dreadful spectacle, when a strange incident occurred: in the meadow appeared a young girl, with long golden hair, upon which rested a wreath of blossoms. She wore a bright red dress, which seemed to me to light up the whole scene like a flame of fire. Nothing in her actions indicated fear of the corpse upon the gallows; on the contrary, she glided toward it barefooted through the grass, singing in a loud but sweet voice, and waving her arms to scare away the birds of prey that had gathered about it, uttering harsh cries and with a great buffeting of wings and snapping of beaks. At the girl's approach they all took flight, except one great vulture, which retained its perch upon the gallows and appeared to defy and threaten her. She ran close up to the obscene creature, jumping, dancing, screaming, until it, too, put out its wide wings and flapped heavily away. Then she ceased her dancing, and, taking a position at the gibbet's foot, calmly and thoughtfully looked up at the swinging body of the unfortunate man.

The maiden's singing had attracted the attention of my companions, and we all stood watching the lovely child and her strange surroundings with too much amazement to speak.

While gazing on the surprising scene, I felt a cold shiver run through my body. This is said to be a sure sign that someone has stepped upon the spot which is

to be your grave. Strange to say, I felt this chill at the moment the maiden stepped under the gallows. But this only shows how the true beliefs of men are mixed up with foolish superstitions; for how could a sincere follower of Saint Franciscus possibly come to be buried beneath a gallows?

'Let us hasten,' I said to my companions, 'and pray for the soul of the dead.'

We soon found our way to the spot, and, without raising our eyes, said prayers with great fervour; especially did I, for my heart was full of compassion for the poor sinner who hung above. I recalled the words of God, who said, 'Vengeance is mine,' and remembered that the dear Saviour had pardoned the thief upon the cross at His side; and who knows that there were not mercy and forgiveness for this poor wretch who had died upon the gallows?

On our approach the maiden had retired a short distance, not knowing what to make of us and our prayers. Suddenly, however, in the midst of our devotions, I heard her sweet, bell-like tones exclaim: 'The vulture! the vulture!' and her voice was agitated, as if she felt great fear. I looked up and saw a great grey bird above the pines, swooping downward. It showed no fear of us, our sacred calling and our pious rites. My brothers, however, were indignant at the interruption caused by the child's voice, and scolded her. But I said: 'The girl is probably a relation of the

dead man. Now think of it, brothers; this terrible bird comes to tear the flesh from his face and feed upon his hands and his body. It is only natural that she should cry out.'

One of the brothers said: 'Go to her, Ambrosius, and command her to be silent that we may pray in peace for the departed soul of this sinful man."

I walked among the fragrant flowers to where the girl stood with her eyes still fixed upon the vulture, which swung in ever narrowing circles about the gallows. Against a mass of silvery flowers on a bush by which she stood the maid's exquisite figure showed to advantage, as I wickedly permitted myself to observe. Perfectly erect and motionless, she watched my advance, though I marked a terrified look in her large, dark eyes, as if she feared that I would do her harm. Even when I was quite near her she made no movement to come forward, as women and children usually did, and kiss my hands.

'Who are you?' I said, 'and what are you doing in this dreadful place all alone?'

She did not answer me, and made neither sign nor motion; so I repeated my question:

'Tell me, child, what are you doing here?'

'Scaring away the vultures,' she replied, in a soft, musical voice, inexpressibly pleasing.

'Are you a relation of the dead man?' I asked.

She shook her head.

'You knew him?' I continued, 'and you pity his unchristian death?'

But she was again silent, and I had to renew my questioning: 'What was his name, and why was he put to death? What crime did he commit?'

'His name was Nathaniel Alfinger, and he killed a man for a woman,' said the maiden, distinctly and in the most unconcerned manner that it is possible to conceive, as if murder and hanging were the commonest and most uninteresting of all events. I was astounded, and gazed at her sharply, but her look was passive and calm, denoting nothing unusual.

'Did you know Nathaniel Alfinger?'

'No.'

'Yet you came here to protect his corpse from the fowls?'

'Yes.'

'Why do you do that service to one whom you did not know?'

'I always do so.'

'How – !'

'Always when any one is hanged here I come and frighten away the birds and make them find other food. See – there is another vulture!'

She uttered a wild, high scream, threw her arms above her head, and ran across the meadow so that I thought her mad. The big bird flew away, and the maiden came quietly back to me, and, pressing her sun-

burnt hands upon her breast, sighed deeply, as from fatigue. With as much mildness as I could put into my voice, I asked her:

'What is your name?'

'Benedicta.'

'And who are your parents?'

'My mother is dead.'

'But your father – where is he?'

She was silent. Then I pressed her to tell me where she lived, for I wanted to take the poor child home and admonish her father to have better care of his daughter and not let her stray into such dreadful places again.

'Where do you live, Benedicta? I pray you tell me.'

'Here.'

'What! here? Ah, my child, here is only the gallows.'

She pointed toward the pines. Following the direction of her finger, I saw among the trees a wretched hut which looked like a habitation more fit for animals than human beings. Then I knew better than she could have told me whose child she was.

When I returned to my companions and they asked me who the girl was, I answered: 'The hangman's daughter.'

3

Having commended the soul of the dead man to the

intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Saints, we left the accursed spot, but as we withdrew I looked back at the lovely child of the hangman. She stood where I had left her, looking after us. Her fair white brow was still crowned with the wreath of primroses, which gave an added charm to her wonderful beauty of feature and expression, and her large, dark eyes shone like the stars of a winter midnight. My companions, to whom the hangman's daughter was a most unchristian object, reproved me for the interest that I manifested in her; but it made me sad to think this sweet and beautiful child was shunned and despised through no fault of her own. Why should she be made to suffer blame because of her father's dreadful calling? And was it not the purest Christian charity which prompted this innocent maiden to keep the vultures from the body of a fellow-creature whom in life she had not even known and who had been adjudged unworthy to live? It seemed to me a more kindly act than that of any professed Christian who bestows money upon the poor. Expressing these feelings to my companions, I found, to my sorrow, that they did not share them; on the contrary, I was called a dreamer and a fool who wished to overthrow the ancient and wholesome customs of the world. Everyone, they said, was bound to execrate the class to which the hangman and his family belonged, for all who associated with such persons would surely be contaminated. I had, however,

the temerity to remain steadfast in my conviction, and with due humility questioned the justice of treating such persons as criminals because they were a part of the law's machinery by which criminals were punished. Because in the church the hangman and his family had a dark corner specially set apart for them, that could not absolve us from our duty as servants of the Lord to preach the gospel of justice and mercy and give an example of Christian love and charity. But my brothers grew very angry with me, and the wilderness rang with their loud vociferations, so that I began to feel as if I were very wicked, although unable to perceive my error. I could do nothing but hope that Heaven would be more merciful to us all than we are to one another. In thinking of the maiden it gave me comfort to know that her name was Benedicta. Perhaps her parents had so named her as a means of blessing to one whom no one else would ever bless.

But I must relate what a wonderful country it was into which we were now arrived. Were we not assured that all the world is the Lord's, for He made it, we might be tempted to think such a wild region the kingdom of the Evil One.

Far down below our path the river roared and foamed between great cliffs, the grey points of which seemed to pierce the very sky. On our left, as we gradually rose out of this chasm, was a black forest of pines, frightful to see, and in front of us a most

formidable peak. This mountain, despite its terrors, had a comical appearance, for it was white and pointed like a fool's cap, and looked as if some one had put a flour-sack on the knave's head. After all, it was nothing but snow. Snow in the middle of the glorious month of May! – surely the works of God are wonderful and almost past belief! The thought came to me that if this old mountain should shake his head the whole region would be full of flying snow.

We were not a little surprised to find that in various places along our road the forest had been cleared away for a space large enough to build a hut and plant a garden. Some of these rude dwellings stood where one would have thought that only eagles would have been bold enough to build; but there is no place, it seems, free from the intrusion of Man, who stretches out his hand for everything, even that which is in the air. When at last we arrived at our destination and beheld the temple and the house erected in this wilderness to the name and glory of our beloved Saint, our hearts were thrilled with pious emotions. Upon the surface of a pine-covered rock was a cluster of huts and houses, the monastery in the midst, like a shepherd surrounded by his flock. The church and monastery were of hewn stone, of noble architecture, spacious and comfortable.

May the good God bless our entrance into this holy place.

4

I HAVE now been in this wilderness for a few weeks, but the Lord, too, is here, as everywhere. My health is good, and this house of our beloved Saint is a stronghold of the Faith, a house of peace, an asylum for those who flee from the wrath of the Evil One, a rest for all who bear the burden of sorrow. Of myself, however, I cannot say so much. I am young, and although my mind is at peace, I have so little experience of the world and its ways that I feel myself peculiarly liable to error and accessible to sin. The course of my life is like a rivulet which draws its silver thread smoothly and silently through friendly fields and flowery meadows, yet knows that when the storms come and the rains fall it may become a raging torrent, defiled with earth and whirling away to the sea the wreckage attesting the madness of its passion and its power.

Not sorrow nor despair drew me away from the world into the sacred retreat of the Church, but a sincere desire to serve the Lord. My only wish is to belong to my beloved Saint, to obey the blessed mandates of the Church, and, as a servant of God, to be charitable to all mankind, whom I dearly love. The Church is, in truth, my beloved mother, for, my parents having died in my infancy I, too, might have perished without care had she not taken pity on me,

fed and clothed me and reared me as her own child. And, oh, what happiness there will be for me, poor monk, when I am ordained and receive holy orders as a priest of the Most High God! Always I think and dream of it and try to prepare my soul for that high and sacred gift. I know I can never be worthy of this great happiness, but I do hope to be an honest and sincere priest, serving God and Man according to the light that is given from above. I often pray Heaven to put me to the test of temptation, that I may pass through the fire unscathed and purified in mind and soul. As it is, I feel the sovereign peace which, in this solitude, lulls my spirit to sleep, and all life's temptations and trials seem far away, like perils of the sea to one who can but faintly hear the distant thunder of the waves upon the beach.

5

Our Superior, Father Andreas, is a mild and pious gentleman. Our brothers live in peace and harmony. They are not idle, neither are they worldly nor arrogant. They are temperate, not indulging too much in the pleasures of the table – a praiseworthy moderation, for all this region, far and wide – the hills and the valleys, the river and forest, with all that they contain – belongs to the monastery. The woods are full of all kinds of game, of which the choicest is brought to

our table, and we relish it exceedingly. In our monastery a drink is prepared from malt and barley – a strong, bitter drink, refreshing after fatigue, but not, to my taste, very good.

The most remarkable thing in this part of the country is the salt-mining. I am told that the mountains are full of salt – how wonderful are the works of the Lord! In pursuit of this mineral Man has penetrated deep into the bowels of the earth by means of shafts and tunnels, and brings forth the bitter marrow of the hills into the light of the sun. The salt I have myself seen in red, brown and yellow crystals. The works give employment to our peasants and their sons, with a few foreign labourers, all under the command of an overseer, who is known as the Saltmaster. He is a stern man, exercising great power, but our Superior and the brothers speak little good of him – not from any unchristian spirit, but because his actions are evil, The Saltmaster has an only son. His name is Rochus, a handsome but wild and wicked youth.

6

The people hereabout are a proud, stubborn race. I am told that in an old chronicle they are described as descendants of the Romans, who in their day drove many tunnels into these mountains to get out the precious salt; and some of these tunnels are still in

existence. From the window of my cell I can see these giant hills and the black forests which at sunset burn like great firebrands along the crests against the sky.

The forefathers of these people (after the Romans) were, I am told, more stubborn still than they are, and continued in idolatry after all the neighbouring peoples had accepted the cross of the Lord our Saviour. Now, however, they bow their stiff necks to the sacred symbol and soften their hearts to receive the living truth. Powerful as they are in body, in spirit they are humble and obedient to the Word. Nowhere else did the people kiss my hand so fervently as here, although I am not a priest – an evidence of the power and victory of our glorious faith.

Physically they are strong and exceedingly handsome in face and figure, especially the young men ; the elder men, too, walk as erect and proud as kings. The women have long golden hair, which they braid and twist about their heads very beautifully, and they love to adorn themselves with jewels. Some have eyes whose dark brilliancy rivals the lustre of the rubies and garnets they wear about their white necks. I am told that the young men fight for the young women as stags for does. Ah, what wicked passions exist in the hearts of men! But since I know nothing of these things, nor shall ever feel such unholy emotions, I must not judge and condemn.

Lord, what a blessing is the peace with which Thou

hast filled the spirits of those who are Thine own! Behold, there is no turmoil in my breast; all is calm there as in the soul of a babe which calls 'Abba,' dear Father. And so may it ever be.

7

I HAVE again seen the hangman's beautiful daughter. As the bells were chiming for mass I saw her in front of the monastery church. I had just come from the bedside of a sick man, and as my thoughts were gloomy the sight of her face was pleasant, and I should have liked to greet her, but her eyes were cast down: she did not notice me. The square in front of the church was filled with people, the men and youths on one side, on the other the women and maidens all clad in their high hats and adorned with their gold chains. They stood close together, but when the poor child approached all stepped aside, whispering and looking askance at her as if she were an accursed leper and they feared infection.

Compassion filled my breast, compelling me to follow the maiden, and, overtaking her, I said aloud: 'God greet you, Benedicta.'

She shrank away as if frightened, then, looking up, recognised me, seemed astonished, blushed again and again and finally hung her head in silence.

" Do you fear to speak to me?' I asked.

But she made no reply. Again I spoke to her: 'Do good, obey the Lord and fear no one: then shall you be saved.'

At this she drew a long sigh, and replied in a low voice, hardly more than a whisper: 'I thank you, my lord.'

'I am not a lord, Benedicta,' I said, 'but a poor servant of God, who is a gracious and kind Father to all His children, however lowly their estate. Pray to Him when your heart is heavy, and He will be near you.'

While I spoke she lifted her head and looked at me like a sad child that is being comforted by its mother. And, still speaking to her out of the great compassion in my heart, I led her into the church before all the people.

But do thou, O holy Franciscus, pardon the sin that I committed during that high sacrament! For while Father Andreas was reciting the solemn words of the mass my eyes constantly wandered to the spot where the poor child knelt in a dark corner set apart for her and her father, forsaken and alone. She seemed to pray with holy zeal, and surely thou didst grace her with a ray of thy favour, for it was through thy love of mankind that thou didst become a great saint, and didst bring before the Throne of Grace thy large heart, bleeding for the sins of all the world. Then shall not I, the humblest of thy followers, have enough of thy spirit to pity this poor outcast who suffers for

no sin of her own? Nay, I feel for her a peculiar tenderness, which I cannot help accepting as a sign from Heaven that I am charged with a special mandate to watch over her, to protect her, and finally to save her soul.

8

Our Superior has sent for me and rebuked me. He told me I had caused great ill-feeling among the brothers and the people, and asked what devil had me in possession that I should walk into church with the daughter of the public hangman.

What could I say but that I pitied the poor maiden and could not do otherwise than as I did?

'Why did you pity her?' he asked.

'Because all the people shun her,' I replied, 'as if she were mortal sin itself, and because she is wholly blameless. It certainly is not her fault that her father is a hangman, nor his either, since, alas, hangmen must be.'

Ah, beloved Franciscus, how the Superior scolded thy poor servant for these bold words.

'And do you repent?' he demanded at the close of his reproof. But how could I repent of my compassion – incited, as I verily believe, by our beloved Saint?

On learning my obduracy, the Superior became very sad. He gave me a long lecture and put me under

hard penance. I took my punishment meekly and in silence, and am now confined in my cell, fasting and chastising myself. Nor in this do I spare myself at all, for it is happiness to suffer for the sake of one so unjustly treated as the poor friendless child.

I stand at the grating of my cell, looking out at the high, mysterious mountains showing black against the evening sky. The weather being mild, I open the window behind the bars to admit the fresh air and better to hear the song of the stream below, which speaks to me with a divine companionship, gentle and consoling.

I know not if I have already mentioned that the monastery is built upon a rock high over the river. Directly under the windows of our cells are the rugged edges of great cliffs, which none can scale but at the peril of his life. Imagine, then, my astonishment when I saw a living figure lift itself up from the awful abyss by the strength of its hands, and, drawing itself across the edge, stand erect upon the very verge! In the dusk I could not make out what kind of creature it was; I thought it some evil spirit come to tempt me; so I crossed myself and said a prayer. Presently there is a movement of its arm, and something flies through the window, past my head, and lies upon the floor of my cell, shining like a white star. I bend and pick it up. It is a bunch of flowers such as I have never seen – leafless, white as snow, soft as velvet, and without

fragrance. As I stand by the window, the better to see the wondrous flowers, my eyes turn again to the figure on the cliff, and I hear a sweet, low voice, which says: 'I am Benedicta, and I thank you.'

Ah, Heaven! it was the child, who, that she might greet me in my loneliness and penance, had climbed the dreadful rocks, heedless of the danger. She knew, then, of my punishment – knew that it was for her. She knew even the very cell in which I was confined. O holy Saint! surely she could not have known all this but from thee; and I were worse than an infidel to doubt that the feeling which I have for her signifies that a command has been laid upon me to save her.

I saw her bending over the frightful precipice. She turned a moment and waved her hand to me and disappeared. I uttered an involuntary cry – had she fallen? I grasped the iron bars of my window and shook them with all my strength, but they did not yield. In my despair I threw myself upon the floor, crying and praying to all the saints to protect the dear child in her dangerous descent if still she lived, to intercede for her unshriven soul if she had fallen. I was still kneeling when Benedicta gave me a sign of her safe arrival below. It was such a shout as these mountaineers utter in their untamed enjoyment of life – only Benedicta's shout, coming from far below in the gorge, and mingled with its own strange echoes, sounded like nothing I had

ever heard from any human throat, and so affected me that I wept, and the tears fell upon the wild flowers in my hand.

9

As a follower of Saint Franciscus, I am not permitted to own anything dear to my heart, so I have disposed of my most precious treasure; I have presented to my beloved Saint the beautiful flowers which were Benedicta's offering. They are so placed before his picture in the monastery church as to decorate the bleeding heart which he carries upon his breast as a symbol of his suffering for mankind.

I have learned the name of the flower: because of its colour, and because it is finer than other flowers, it is called Edelweiss – noble white. It grows in so rare perfection only upon the highest and wildest rocks – mostly upon cliffs, over abysses many hundred feet in depth, where one false step would be fatal to him who gathers it.

These beautiful flowers, then, are the real evil spirits of this wild region; they lure many mortals to a dreadful death. The brothers here have told me that never a year passes but some shepherd, some hunter or some bold youth, attracted by these wonderful blossoms, is lost in the attempt to get them.

May God be merciful to all their souls!

10

I MUST have turned pale when one of the brothers reported at the supper table that upon the picture of Saint Franciscus had been found a bunch of edelweiss of such rare beauty as grows nowhere else in the country but at the summit of a cliff which is more than a thousand feet high, and overhangs a dreadful lake. The brothers tell wondrous tales of the horrors of this lake – how wild its waters and how deep, and how the most hideous spectres are seen along its shores or rising out of it.

Benedicta's edelweiss, therefore, has caused great commotion and wonder, for even among the boldest hunters there are few, indeed, who dare to climb that cliff by the haunted lake. And the tender child has accomplished this feat! She has gone quite alone to that horrible place, and has climbed the almost vertical wall of the mountain to the green spot where the flowers grow with which she was moved to greet me. I doubt not that Heaven guarded her against mishap in order that I might have a visible sign and token that I am charged with the duty of her salvation.

Ah, thou poor sinless child, accurst in the eyes of the people, God hath signified His care of thee, and in my heart I feel already something of that adoration which shall be thy due when for thy purity and holiness

He shall bestow upon thy relics some signal mark of His favour, and the Church shall declare thee blessed!

I have learned another thing that I will chronicle here. In this country these flowers are the sign of a faithful love: the youth presents them to his sweetheart, and the maidens decorate the hats of their lovers with them. It is clear that, in expressing her gratitude to a humble servant of the Church, Benedicta was moved, perhaps without knowing it, to signify at the same time her love of the Church itself, although, alas, she has yet too little cause.

As I ramble about here, day after day, I am becoming familiar with every path in the forest, in the dark pass, and on the slopes of the mountains.

I am often sent to the homes of the peasants, the hunters and the shepherds, to carry either medicine to the sick or consolation to the sad. The most reverend Superior has told me that as soon as I receive holy orders I shall have to carry the sacraments to the dying, for I am the youngest and the strongest of the brothers. In these high places it sometimes occurs that a hunter or a shepherd falls from the rocks, and after some days is found, still living. It is then the duty of the priest to perform the offices of our holy religion at the bedside of the sufferer, so that the blessed Saviour may be there to receive the departing soul.

That I may be worthy of such grace, may our

beloved Saint keep my heart pure from every earthly passion and desire!

II

The monastery has celebrated a great festival, and I will report all that occurred.

For many days before the event the brothers were busy preparing for it. Some decorated the church with sprays of pine and birch and with flowers.

They went with the other men and gathered the most beautiful Alpine roses they could find, and as it is midsummer they grow in great abundance. On the day before the festival the brothers sat in the garden, weaving garlands to adorn the church; even the most reverend Superior and the Fathers took pleasure in our merry task. They walked beneath the trees and chatted pleasantly while encouraging the brother butler to spend freely the contents of the cellars.

The next morning was the holy procession. It was very beautiful to see, and added to the glory of our holy Church. The Superior walked under a purple silken canopy, surrounded by the worthy Fathers, and bore in his hands the sacred emblem of the crucifixion of our Saviour. We brothers followed, bearing burning candles and singing psalms. Behind us came a great crowd of the people, dressed in their finest attire.

The proudest of those in the procession were the

mountaineers and the salt-miners, the Saltmaster at their head on a beautiful horse adorned with costly trappings. He was a proud-looking man, with his great sword at his side and a plumed hat upon his broad, high brow. Behind him rode Rochus, his son. When we had collected in front of the gate to form a line I took special notice of that young man. I judge him to be self-willed and bold. He wore his hat on the side of his head and cast flaming glances upon the women and the maidens. He looked contemptuously upon us monks. I fear he is not a good Christian, but he is the most beautiful youth that I have ever seen: tall and slender like a young pine, with light brown eyes and golden locks.

The Saltmaster is as powerful in this region as our Superior. He is appointed by the Duke and has judicial powers in all affairs. He has even the power of life and death over those accused of murder or any other abominable crime. But the Lord has fortunately endowed him with good judgment and wisdom.

Through the village the procession moved out into the valley and down to the entrances of the great salt mines. In front of the principal mine an altar was erected, and there our Superior read high mass, while all the people knelt. I observed that the Saltmaster and his son knelt and bent their heads with visible reluctance and this made me very sad. After the service the procession moved toward the hill called 'Mount Calvary,'

which is still higher than the monastery, and from the top of which one has a good view of the whole country below. There the reverend Superior displayed the crucifix in order to banish the evil powers which abound in these terrible mountains; and he also said prayers and pronounced anathemas against all demons infesting the valley below. The bells chimed their praises to the Lord, and it seemed as if divine voices were ringing through the wilderness. It was all, indeed, most beautiful and good.

I looked about me to see if the child of the hangman were present, but I could not see her anywhere, and knew not whether to rejoice that she was out of reach of the insults of the people or to mourn because deprived of the spiritual strength that might have come to me from looking upon her heavenly beauty.

After the services came the feast. Upon a meadow sheltered by trees tables were spread, and the clergy and the people, the most reverend Superior and the great Saltmaster partook of the viands served by the young men. It was interesting to see the young men make big fires of pine and maple, put great pieces of beef upon wooden spits, turn them over the coals until they were brown, and then lay them before the Fathers and the mountaineers. They also boiled mountain trout and carp in large kettles. The wheaten bread was brought in immense baskets, and as to drink, there was assuredly no scarcity of that, for the Superior and the

Saltmaster had each given a mighty cask of beer. Both of these monstrous barrels lay on wooden stands under an ancient oak. The boys and the Saltmaster's men drew from the cask which he had given, while that of the Superior was served by the brother butler and a number of us younger monks. In honour of Saint Franciscus I must say that the clerical barrel was of vastly greater size than that of the Saltmaster.

Separate tables had been provided for the Superior and the Fathers, and for the Saltmaster and the best of his people. The Saltmaster and Superior sat upon chairs which stood upon a beautiful carpet, and their seats were screened from the sun by a linen canopy. At the table, surrounded by their beautiful wives and daughters, sat many knight, who had come from their distant castles to share in the great festival. I helped at table. I handed the dishes and filled the goblets and was able to see how good an appetite the company had, and how they loved that brown and bitter drink. I could see also how amorously the Saltmaster's son looked at the ladies, which provoked me very much, as he could not marry them all, especially those already married.

We had music, too. Some boys from the village, who practise on various instruments in their spare moments, were the performers. Ah, how they yelled, those flutes and pipes, and how the fiddle bows danced and chirped! I do not doubt the music was very good, but Heaven has not seen fit to give me the right kind of ears.

I am sure our blessed Saint must have derived great satisfaction from the sight of so many people eating and drinking their bellies full. Heavens! how they did eat – what unearthly quantities they did away with! But that was nothing to their drinking. I firmly believe that if every mountaineer had brought along a barrel of his own he would have emptied it, all by himself. But the women seemed to dislike the beer, especially the young girls. Usually before drinking a young man would hand his cup to one of the maids, who barely touched it with her lips, and, making a grimace, turned away her face. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the ways of woman to say with certainty if this proved that at other times they were so abstemious.

After eating, the young men played at various games which exhibited their agility and strength. Holy Franciscus! what legs, they have, what arms and necks! They leapt, they wrestled with one another; it was like the fighting of bears. The mere sight of it caused me to feel great fear. It seemed as if they would crush one another. But the maidens looked on, feeling neither fear nor anxiety; they giggled and appeared well pleased. It was wonderful, too, to hear the voices of these young mountaineers; they threw back their heads and shouted till the echoes rang from the mountain-sides and roared in the gorges as if from the throats of a legion of demons.

Foremost among all was the Saltmaster's son. He

sprang like a deer, fought like a fiend, and bellowed like a wild bull. Among these mountaineers he was a king. I observed that many were jealous of his strength and beauty, and secretly hated him; yet all obeyed. It was beautiful to see how this young man bent his slender body while leaping and playing in the games – how he threw up his head like a stag at gaze, shook his golden locks and stood in the midst of his fellows with flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes. How sad to think that pride and passion should make their home in so lovely a body, which seems created for the habitation of a soul that would glorify its Maker!

It was near dusk when the Superior, the Saltmaster, the Fathers and all the distinguished guests parted and retired to their homes, leaving the others at drink and dance. My duties compelled me to remain with the brother butler to serve the debauching youths with beer from the great cask. Young Rochus remained too. I do not know how it occurred, but suddenly he stood before me. His looks were dark and his manner proud.

'Are you,' he said, 'the monk who gave offence to the people the other day?'

I asked humbly – though beneath my monk's robe I felt a sinful anger: 'What are you speaking of?'

'As if you did not know!' he said, haughtily. 'Now bear in mind what I tell you; if you ever show any friendship toward that girl I shall teach you a lesson which you will not soon forget. You monks are likely

to call your impertinence by the name of some virtue; but I know the trick, and will have none of it. Make a note of that, you young cowl-wearer, for your handsome face and big eyes will not save you.'

With that he turned his back upon me and went away, but I heard his strong voice ringing out upon the night as he sang and shouted with the others. I was greatly alarmed to learn that this bold boy had cast his eyes upon the hangman's lovely daughter. His feeling for her was surely not honourable, or, instead of hating me for being kind to her, he would have been grateful and would have thanked me. I feared for the child, and again and again did I promise my blessed Saint that I would watch over and protect her, in obedience to the miracle which he has wrought in my breast regarding her. With that wondrous feeling to urge me on, I cannot be slack in my duty, and, Benedicta, thou shalt be saved – thy body and thy soul!

12

Let me continue my report.

The boys threw dry brushwood into the fire so that the flames illuminated the whole meadow and shone red upon the trees. Then they laid hands upon the village maidens and began to turn and swing them round and round. Holy saints! how they stamped and turned and threw their hats in the air, kicked up their heels,

and lifted the girls from the ground, as if the sturdy wenches were nothing but feather balls! They shouted and yelled as if all the evil spirits had them in possession, so that I wished a herd of swine might come, that the devils might leave these human brutes and go into the four-legged ones. The boys were quite full of the brown beer, which for its bitterness and strength is a beastly drink.

Before long the madness of intoxication broke out; they attacked one another with fists and knives, and it looked as if they would do murder. Suddenly the Salt-master's son, who had stood looking on, leaped among them, caught two of the combatants by the hair and knocked their heads together with such force that the blood started from their noses, and I thought surely their skulls had been crushed like egg-shells; but they must have been very hard-headed, for on being released they seemed little the worse for their punishment. After much shouting and screaming, Rochus succeeded in making peace, which seemed to me, poor worm, quite heroic. The music set in again: the fiddles scraped and the pipes shrieked, while the boys with torn clothes and scratched and bleeding faces, renewed the dance as if nothing had occurred. Truly, this is a people that would gladden the heart of a Bramarbas or a Holofernes!

I had scarcely recovered from the fright which Rochus had given me, when I was made to feel a far greater one. Rochus was dancing with a tall and

beautiful girl, who looked the very queen of this young king. They made such mighty leaps and dizzy turns, but at the same time so graceful, that all looked on with astonishment and pleasure. The girl had a sensuous smile on her lips and a bold look in her brown face, which seemed to say: 'See! I am the mistress of his heart!' But suddenly he pushed her from him as in disgust, broke from the circle of dancers, and cried to his friends: 'I am going to bring my own partner. Who will go with me?'

The tall girl, maddened by the insult, stood looking at him with the face of a demon, her black eyes burning like flames of hell! But her discomfiture amused the drunken youths, and they laughed aloud.

Snatching a firebrand and swinging it about his head till the sparks flew in showers, Rochus cried again: 'Who goes with me?' and walked rapidly away into the forest. The others seizing firebrands also, ran after him, and soon their voices could be heard far away, ringing out upon the night, themselves no longer seen. I was still looking in the direction which they had taken, when the tall girl whom Rochus had insulted stepped to my side and hissed something into my ear. I felt her hot breath on my cheek.

'If you care for the hangman's daughter, then hasten and save her from that drunken wretch. No woman resists him!'

God! how the wild words of that woman horrified

me! I did not doubt the girl's words, but in my anxiety for the poor child I asked: 'How can I save her?'

'Run and warn her, monk,' the wench replied: 'she will listen to you.'

'But they will find her sooner than I.'

'They are drunk and will not go fast. Besides, I know a path leading to the hangman's hut by a shorter route.'

'Then show me and be quick!' I cried.

She glided away, motioning me to follow. We were soon in the woods, where it was so dark I could hardly see the woman's figure; but she moved as fast and her step was as sure as in the light of day. Above us we could see the torches of the boys, which showed that they had taken the longer path along the mountain-side. I heard their wild shouts, and trembled for the child. We had walked for some time in silence, having left the youths far behind, when the young woman began speaking to herself. At first I did not understand, but soon my ears caught every passionate word:

'He shall not have her! To the devil with the hangman's whelp! Every one despises her and spits at the sight of her. It is just like him – he does not care for what people think or say. Because they hate he loves. Besides, she has a pretty face. I'll make it pretty for her! I'll mark it with blood! But if she were the daughter of the devil himself he would not rest until he had her. He shall not!'

She lifted her arms and laughed wildly – I shuddered

to hear her! I thought of the dark powers that live in the human breast, though I know as little of them, thank God, as a child.

At length we reached the Galgenberg, where stands the hangman's hut, and a few moments' climb brought us near the door.

'There she lives,' said the girl, pointing to the hut, through the windows of which shone the yellow light of a tallow candle; 'go warn her. The hangman is ill and unable to protect his daughter, even if he dared. You'd better take her away – take her to the Alpfeld on the Göll, where my father has a house. They will not look for her up there.'

With that she left me and vanished in the darkness.

13

Looking in at the window of the hut, I saw the hangman sitting in a chair, with his daughter beside him, her hand upon his shoulder. I could hear him cough and groan, and knew that she was trying to soothe him in his pain. A world of love and sorrow was in her face, which was more beautiful than ever.

Nor did I fail to observe how clean and tidy were the room and all in it. The humble dwelling looked, indeed, like a place blessed by the peace of God. Yet these blameless persons are treated as accurst and hated like mortal sin! What greatly pleased me was an image of

the Blessed Virgin on the wall opposite the window at which I stood. The frame was decorated with flowers of the field, and the mantle of the Holy Mother festooned with edelweiss.

I knocked at the door, calling out at the same time: 'Do not fear; it is I – Brother Ambrosius.'

It seemed to me that, on hearing my voice and name, Benedicta showed a sudden joy in her face, but perhaps it was only surprise – may the saints preserve me from the sin of pride. She came to the window and opened it.

'Benedicta,' said I, hastily, after returning her greeting, 'wild and drunken boys are on their way hither to take you to the dance. Rochus is with them, and says that he will fetch you to dance with him. I have come before them to assist you to escape.'

At the name of Rochus I saw the blood rise into her cheeks and suffuse her whole face with crimson. Alas, I perceived that my jealous guide was right: no woman could resist that beautiful boy, not even this pious and virtuous child. When her father comprehended what I said he rose to his feet and stretched out his feeble arms as if to shield her from harm, but, although his soul was strong, his body, I knew, was powerless. I said to him: 'Let me take her away; the boys are drunk and know not what they do. Your resistance would only make them angry, and they might harm you both. Ah, look! See their torches; hear their boisterous voices! Hasten, Benedicta – be quick, be quick!'

Benedicta sprang to the side of the now sobbing old man and tenderly embraced him. Then she hurried from the room, and after covering my hands with kisses ran away into the woods, disappearing in the night, at which I was greatly surprised. I waited for her to return, for a few minutes, then entered the cabin to protect her father from the wild youths who, I thought, would visit their disappointment upon him.

But they did not come. I waited and listened in vain. All at once I heard shouts of joy and screams that made me tremble and pray to the blessed Saint. But the sounds died away in the distance, and I knew that the boys had retraced their steps down the Galgenberg to the meadow of the fires. The sick man and I spoke of the miracle which had changed their hearts, and we were filled with gratitude and joy. Then I returned along the path by which I had come. As I arrived near the meadow, I could hear a wilder and madder uproar than ever, and could see through the trees the glare of greater fires, with the figures of the youths and a few maids dancing in the open, their heads uncovered, their hair streaming over their shoulders, their garments disordered by the fury of their movements. They circled about the fires, wound in and out among them, showing black or red according to how the light struck them, and looking altogether like Demons of the Pit commemorating some infernal anniversary or some new torment for the damned. And, holy Saviour! there, in the midst

of an illuminated space, upon which the others did not trespass, dancing by themselves and apparently forgetful of all else, were Rochus and Benedicta!

14

Holy Mother of God! what can be worse than the fall of an angel? I saw – I understood, then, that in leaving me and her father, Benedicta had gone willingly to meet the very fate from which I had striven to save her!

'The accurst wench has run into Rochus' arms,' hissed someone at my side, and, turning, I saw the tall brown girl who had been my guide, her face distorted with hate. 'I wish that I had killed her. Why did you suffer her to play us this trick, you fool of a monk?'

I pushed her aside and ran toward the couple without thinking what I did. But what could I do? Even at that instant, as though to prevent my interference, though really unconscious of my presence, the drunken youths formed a circle about them, bawling their admiration and clapping their hands to mark the time.

As these two beautiful figures danced they were a lovely picture. He, tall, slender and lithe, was like a god of the heathen Greeks; while Benedicta looked like a fairy. Seen through the slight mist upon the meadows, her delicate figure, moving swiftly and swaying from side to side, seemed veiled with a web of purple and gold. Her eyes were cast modestly upon the ground; her

motions, though agile, were easy and graceful; her face glowed with excitement, and it seemed as if her whole soul were absorbed in the dance. Poor, sweet child! her error made me weep, but I forgave her. Her life was so barren and joyless; why should she not love to dance? Heaven bless her! But Rochus – ah, God forgive him!

While I was looking on at all this, and thinking what it was my duty to do, the jealous girl – she is called Amula – had stood near me, cursing and blaspheming. When the boys applauded Benedicta's dancing Amula made as if she would spring forward and strangle her. But I held the furious creature back, and, stepping forward, called out: 'Benedicta!'

She started at the sound of my voice, but though she hung her head a little lower, she continued dancing. Amula could control her rage no longer, and rushed forward with a savage cry, trying to break into the circle. But the drunken boys prevented. They jeered at her, which maddened her the more, and she made effort after effort to reach her victim. The boys drove her away with shouts, curses and laughter. Holy Franciscus, pray for us! – when I saw the hatred in Amula's eyes a cold shudder ran through my body. God be with us! I believe the creature capable of killing the poor child with her own hands, and glorying in the deed!

I ought now to have gone home, but I remained.

I thought of what might occur when the dance was over, for I had been told that the youths commonly accompanied their partners home, and I was horrified to think of Rochus and Benedicta alone together in the forest and the night.

Imagine my surprise when all at once Benedicta lifted her head, stopped dancing, and, looking kindly at Rochus, said in her sweet voice, so like the sound of silver bells:

'I thank you, sir, for having chosen me for your partner in the dance in such a knightly way.'

Then, bowing to the Saltmaster's son, she slipped quickly through the circle, and, before anyone could know what was occurring, disappeared in the black spaces of the forest. Rochus at first seemed stupefied with amazement, but when he realised that Benedicta was gone he raved like a madman. He shouted: 'Benedicta!' He called her endearing names; but all to no purpose – she had vanished. Then he hurried after her and wanted to search the forest with torches, but the other youths dissuaded him. Observing my presence, he turned his wrath upon me; I think if he had dared he would have struck me. He cried: 'I'll make you smart for this, you miserable cowl-wearer!'

But I do not fear him. Praise be to God! Benedicta is not guilty, and I can respect her as before. Yet I tremble to think of the many perils which beset her. She is defenceless against the hate of Amula as well as

against the lust of Rochus. Ah, if I could be ever at her side to watch over and protect her! But I commend her to Thee, O Lord: the poor motherless child shall surely not trust to Thee in vain.

15

Alas! my unhappy fate! – again punished and again unable to find myself guilty.

It seems that Amula has talked about Benedicta and Rochus. The brown wench strolled from house to house telling how Rochus went to the gallows for his partner in the dance. And she added that Benedicta had acted in the most shameless manner with the drunken boys. When the people spoke to me of this I enlightened them regarding the facts, as it seemed to me my duty to do, and told all as it had occurred.

By this testimony, in contradiction of one who broke the Decalogue by bearing false witness against her neighbour I have, it seems, offended the Superior. I was summoned before him and accused of defending the hangman's daughter against the statements of an honest Christian girl. I asked, meekly, what I should have done – whether I should have permitted the innocent and defenceless to be calumniated.

'Of what interest,' I was asked, 'can the hangman's daughter be to you? Moreover, it is a fact that she went of her own will to associate with the drunken boys.'

To this I replied: 'She went out of love to her father, for if the intoxicated youths had not found her they would have maltreated him – and she loves the old man, who is ill and helpless. Thus it happened, and thus I have testified.'

But His Reverence insisted that I was wrong, and put me under severe penance. I willingly undergo it: I am glad to suffer for the sweet child. Nor will I murmur against the revered Superior, for he is my master, against whom to rebel, even in thought, is sin. Is not obedience the foremost commandment of our great saint for all his disciples? Ah, how I long for the priestly ordination and the holy oil! Then I shall have peace and be able to serve Heaven better and with greater acceptance.

I am troubled about Benedicta. If not confined to my cell I should go toward the Galgenberg: perhaps I should meet her. I grieve for her as if she were my sister.

Belonging to the Lord, I have no right to love anything but Him who died upon the cross for our sins – all other love is evil. O blessed Saints in Heaven! what if it be that this feeling which I have accepted as a sign and token that I am charged with the salvation of Benedicta's soul is but an earthly love? Pray for me, O dear Franciscus, that I may have the light, lest I stray into that road which leads down to Hell. Light and strength, beloved Saint, that I may know the right path, and walk therein forever!

16

I STAND at the window of my cell. The sun sinks and the shadows creep higher on the sides of the mountains beyond the abyss. The abyss itself is filled with a mist whose billowy surface looks like a great lake. I think how Benedicta climbed out of these awful depths to fling me the edelweiss; I listen for the sound of the stones displaced by her daring little feet and plunging into the chasm below. But night after night has passed. I hear the wind among the pines; I hear the water roaring in the deeps; I hear the distant song of the nightingale; but her voice I do not hear.

Every evening the mist rises from the abyss. It forms billows; then rings; then flakes, and these rise and grow and darken until they are great clouds. They cover the hill and the valley, the tall pines and the snow-pointed mountains. They extinguish the last remaining touches of sunlight on the higher peaks, and it is night. Alas, in my soul also there is night – dark, starless and without hope of dawn!

To-day is Sunday. Benedicta was not in church – 'the dark corner' remained vacant. I was unable to keep my mind upon the service, a sin for which I shall do voluntary penance.

Amula was among the other maidens, but I saw nothing of Rochus. It seemed to me that her watchful

black eyes were a sufficient guard against any rival, and that in her jealousy Benedicta would find protection. God can make the basest passions serve the most worthy ends, and the reflection gave me pleasure, which, alas, was of short life.

The services being at an end, the Fathers and friars left the church slowly in procession, moving through the vestry, while the people went out at the main entrance. From the long covered gallery leading out of the vestry one has a full view of the public square of the village. As we friars, who were behind the Fathers, were in the gallery, something occurred which I shall remember even to the day of my death as an unjust deed which Heaven permitted for I know not what purpose. It seems that the Fathers must have known what was coming, for they halted in the gallery, giving us all an opportunity to look out upon the square.

I heard a confused noise of voices. It came nearer, and the shouting and yelling sounded like the approach of all the fiends of Hell. Being at the farther end of the gallery I was unable to see what was going on in the square, so I asked a brother at a window near by what it was all about.

'They are taking a woman to the pillory,' he answered.

'Who is it?'

'A girl.'

'What has she done?'

'You ask a foolish question. Whom are pillories and whipping-posts for but fallen women?'

The howling mob passed farther into the square, so that I had a full view. In the front were boys, leaping, gesticulating and singing vile songs. They seemed mad with joy and made savage by the shame and pain of their fellow-creature. Nor did the maids behave much better. 'Fie upon the outcast!' they cried. 'See what it is to be a sinner! Thank heaven, we are virtuous.'

In the rear of these yelling boys, surrounded by this mob of screaming women and girls – O God! how can I write it? How can I express the horror of it? In the midst of it all – she, the lovely, the sweet, the immaculate Benedicta!

O my Saviour! how did I see all this, yet am still living to relate it? I must have come near to death. The gallery, the square, the people seemed whirling round and round; the earth sank beneath my feet, and, although I strained my eyes open to see, yet all was dark. But it must have been for but a short time; I recovered, and, looking down into the square, saw her again.

They had clothed her in a long gray cloak, fastened at the waist with a rope. Her head bore a wreath of straw, and on her breast, suspended by a string about the neck, was a black tablet bearing in chalk the word 'Buhle' – harlot.

By the end of the rope about her waist a man led her.

I looked at him closely, and – O most holy Son of God, what brutes and beasts Thou didst come to save! – it was Benedicta's father! They had compelled the poor old man to perform one of the duties of his office by leading his own child to the pillory! I learned later that he had implored the Superior on his knees not to lay this dreadful command upon him, but all in vain.

The memory of this scene can never leave me. The hangman did not remove his eyes from his daughter's face, and she frequently nodded at him and smiled. By the grace of God, the maiden smiled!

The mob insulted her, called her vile names and spat upon the ground in front of her feet. Nor was this all. Observing that she took no notice of them, they pelted her with dust and grass. This was more than the poor father could endure, and, with a faint, inarticulate moan, he fell to the ground in a swoon.

Oh, the pitliess wretches! – they wanted to lift him up and make him finish his task, but Benedicta stretched out her arm in supplication, and with an expression of so ineffable tenderness upon her beautiful face that even the brutal mob felt her gentle power and recoiled before her, leaving the unconscious man upon the ground. She knelt and took her father's head in her lap. She whispered in his ear words of love and comfort. She stroked his gray hair and kissed his pale lips until she had coaxed him into consciousness and he had opened his eyes. Benedicta, thrice blessed Benedicta, thou

surely art born to be a saint, for thou didst show a divine patience like that with which our Saviour bore His cross and with it all the sins of the world!

She helped her father to rise, and smiled brightly in his face when he made out to stand. She shook the dust from his clothing, and then, still smiling and murmuring words of encouragement, handed him the rope. The boys yelled and sang, the women screamed, and the wretched old man led his innocent child to the place of shame.

17

When I was back again in my cell I threw myself upon the stones and cried aloud to God against the injustice and misery that I had witnessed, and against the still greater misery of which I had been spared the sight. I saw in my mind the father binding his child to the post. I saw the brutal populace dance about her with savage delight. I saw the vicious Amula spit in the pure one's face. I prayed long and earnestly that the poor child might be made strong to endure her great affliction.

Then I sat and waited. I waited for the setting of the sun, for at that time the sufferer is commonly released from the whipping-post. The minutes seemed hours, the hours eternities. The sun did not move; the day of shame was denied a night.

It was in vain that I tried to understand it all; I was stunned and dazed. Why did Rochus permit Benedicta to be so disgraced? Does he think the deeper her shame the more easily he can win her? I know not, nor do I greatly care to search out his motive. But, God help me! I myself feel her disgrace, most keenly.

And, Lord, Lord, what a light has come into the understanding of Thy servant! It has come to me like a revelation out of Heaven that my feeling for Benedicat is more and less than what I thought it. It is an earthly love – the love of a man for a woman. As first this knowledge broke into my consciousness my breath beat quick and hard; it seemed to me that I should suffocate. Yet such was the hardness of my heart from witnessing so terrible an injustice tolerated by Heaven, that I was unable wholly to repent. In the sudden illumination I was blinded: I could not clearly see my degree of sin. The tumult of my emotions was not altogether disagreeable; I had to confess to myself that I would not willingly forego it even if I knew it wicked. May the Mother of Mercy intercede for me!

Even now I cannot think that in supposing myself to have a divine mandate to save the soul of Benedicta, and prepare her for a life of sanctity, I was wholly in error. This other human desire – comes it not also of God? Is it not concerned for the good of its object? And what can be a greater good than salvation of the soul? – a holy life on earth, and in Heaven eternal

happiness and glory to reward it. Surely the spiritual and the carnal love are not so widely different as I have been taught to think them. They are, perhaps, not antagonistic, and are but expressions of the same will. O holy Franciscus, in this great light that has fallen about me, guide thou my steps. Show to my dazzled eyes the straight, right way to Benedicta's good!

At length the sun disappeared behind the cloister. The flakes and cloudlets gathered upon the horizon; the haze rose from the abyss and, beyond, the purple shadow climbed higher and higher, the great slope of the mountain, extinguishing at last the gleam of light upon the summit. Thank God, oh, thank God, she is free!

18

I HAVE been very ill, but by the kind attention of the brothers am sufficiently recovered to leave my bed. It must be God's will that I live to serve Him, for certainly I have done nothing to merit His great mercy in restoring me to health. Still, I feel a yearning in my soul for a complete dedication of my poor life to Him and His service. To embrace Him and be bound up in His love are now the only aspirations that I have. As soon as the holy oil is on my brow, these hopes, I am sure, will be fulfilled, and, purged of my hopeless earthly passion for Benedicta, I shall be lifted into a

new and diviner life. And it may be that then I can, without offence to Heaven or peril to my soul, watch over and protect her far better than I can now as a wretched monk.

I have been weak. My feet, like those of an infant, failed to support my body. The brothers carried me into the garden. With what gratitude I again looked upward into the blue of the sky! How rapturously I gazed upon the white peaks of the mountains and the black forests on their slopes! Every blade of grass seemed to me of special interest, and I greeted each passing insect as if it were an old acquaintance.

My eyes wander to the south, where the Galgenberg is, and I think unceasingly of the poor child of the hangman. What has become of her? Has she survived her terrible experience in the public square? What is she doing? Oh, that I were strong enough to walk to the Galgenberg! But I am not permitted to leave the monastery, and there is none of whom I dare ask her fate. The friars look at me strangely; it is as if they no longer regarded me as one of them. Why is this so? I love them, and desire to live in harmony with them. They are kind and gentle, yet they seem to avoid me as much as they can. What does it all mean?

19

I HAVE been in the presence of the most reverend

Superior, Father Andreas. 'Your recovery was miraculous,' said he. 'I wish you to be worthy of such mercies, and to prepare your soul for the great blessing that awaits you. I have, therefore, my son, ordained that you leave us for a season, to dwell apart in the solitude of the mountains, for the double purpose of restoring your strength and affording you an insight into your own heart. Make a severe examination apart from any distractions, and you will perceive, I do not doubt, the gravity of your error. Pray that a divine light may be shed upon your path, that you may walk upright in the service of the Lord as a true priest and apostle, with immunity from all base passions and earthly desires.'

I had not the presumption to reply. I submit to the will of His Reverence without a murmur, for obedience is a rule of our Order. Nor do I fear the wilderness, although I have heard that it is infested with wild beasts and evil spirits. Our Superior is right: the time passed in solitude will be to me a season of probation, purification and healing, of which I am doubtless in sore need. So far I have progressed in sin only; for in confession I have kept back many things. Not from the fear of punishment, but because I could not mention the name of the maiden before any other than my holy and blessed Franciscus, who alone can understand. He looks kindly down upon me from the skies, listening to my sorrow; and whatever of guilt there may be in

my compassion for the innocent and persecuted child he willingly overlooks for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, who also suffered injustice and was acquainted with grief.

In the mountains it will be my duty to dig certain roots and send them to the monastery. From such roots as I am instructed to gather the Fathers distil a liquor which has become famous throughout the land, even as far, I have been told, as the great city of Munich. This liquor is so strong and so fiery with spices that after drinking it one feels a burning in his throat as if he had swallowed a flame from Hell; yet it is held in high esteem everywhere by reason of its medicinal properties, it being a remedy for many kinds of ills and infirmities; and it is said to be good also for the health of the soul, though I should suppose a godly life might be equally efficacious in places where the liquor cannot be obtained. However this may be, from the sale of the liquor comes the chief revenue of the monastery.

The root from which it is chiefly made is that of an Alpine plant called *gentiana*, which grows in great abundance on the sides of the mountains. In the months of July and August the friars dig the roots and dry them by fire in the mountain cabins, and they are then packed and sent to the monastery. The Fathers have the sole right to dig the root in this region, and the secret of manufacturing the liquor is jealously guarded.

As I am to live in the high country for some time,

the Superior has directed me to collect the root from time to time as I have the strength. A boy, a servant in the monastery, is to guide me to my solitary station, carrying up my provisions and returning immediately. He will come once a week to renew my supply of food and take away the roots that I shall have dug.

No time has been lost in dispatching me on my penitential errand. This very evening I have taken leave of the Superior, and, retiring to my cell, have packed my holy books, the *Agnus* and the *Life of St. Franciscus*, in a bag. Nor have I forgotten my writing-materials with which to continue my diary. These preparations made, I have fortified my soul with prayer, and am ready for any fate, even an encounter with the beasts and demons.

Beloved Saint, forgive the pain I feel in going away without having seen Benedicta, or even knowing what has become of her since that dreadful day. Thou knowest, O glorious one, and humbly do I confess, that I long to hasten to the Galgenberg, if only to get one glimpse of the hut which holds the fairest and best of her sex. Take me not, holy one, too severely to task, I beseech thee, for the weakness of my erring human heart!

20

As I left the monastery with my young guide all was quiet within its walls; the holy Brotherhood slept the

sleep of peace, which had so long been denied to me. It was early dawn, and the clouds in the east were beginning to show narrow edges of gold and crimson as we ascended the path leading to the mountain. My guide, with bag upon his shoulder, led, and I followed, with my robe fastened back and a stout stick in my hand. This had a sharp iron point which might be used against wild beasts.

My guide was a light-haired, blue-eyed young fellow with a cheerful and amiable face. He evidently found a keen delight in climbing his native hills toward the high country whither we were bound. He seemed not to feel the weight of the burden that he bore; his gait was light and free, his footing sure. He sprang up the steep and rugged way like a mountain-goat.

The boy was in high spirits. He told me strange tales of ghosts and goblins, witches and fairies. These last he seemed to be very well acquainted with. He said they appeared in shining garments, with bright hair and beautiful wings, and this description agrees very nearly with what is related of them in books by certain of the Fathers. Anyone to whom they take a fancy, says the boy, they are able to keep under their spell, and no one can break the enchantment, not even the Holy Virgin. But I judge that this is true of only such as are in sin, and that the pure in heart have nothing to fear from them.

We travelled up hill and down, through forests and

blooming meadows and across ravines. The mountain-streams, hastening down to the valleys, full-banked and noisy, seemed to be relating the wonderful things that they had seen and the strange adventures they had met with on their way. Sometimes the hillsides and the woods resounded with nature's various voices, calling, whispering, sighing, chanting praises to the Lord of all. Now and again we passed a mountaineer's cabin, before which played children, yellow-haired and unkempt. On seeing strangers, they ran away. But the women came forward, with infants in their arms, and asked for benedictions. They offered us milk, butter, green cheese, and black bread. We frequently found the men seated in front of their huts, carving wood, mostly images of the Saviour upon the cross. These are sent to the city of Munich, where they are offered for sale, bringing, I am told, considerable money and much honour to their pious makers.

At last we arrived at the shore of a lake, but a dense fog prevented a clear view of it. A clumsy little boat was found moored to the bank; my guide bade me enter it, and presently it seemed as if we were gliding through the sky in the midst of the clouds. I had never before been on the water, and felt a terrible misgiving lest we should capsize and drown. We heard nothing but the sound of the ripples against the sides of the boat. Here and there, as we advanced, some dark object became dimly visible for a moment, then vanished as suddenly

as it had appeared, and we seemed gliding again through empty space. As the mist at times lifted a little, I observed great black rocks protruding from the water, and not far from shore were lying giant trees half submerged, with huge limbs that looked like the bones of some monstrous skeleton. The scene was so full of horrors that even the joyous youth was silent now, his watchful eye ever seeking to penetrate the fog in search of new dangers.

By all these signs I knew that we were crossing that fearful lake which is haunted by ghosts and demons, and I therefore commended my soul to God. The power of the Lord overcomes all evil. Scarcely had I said my prayer against the spirits of darkness, when suddenly the veil of fog was rent asunder, and like a great rose of fire the sun shone out, clothing the world in garments of colour and gold!

Before this glorious eye of God the darkness fled and was no more. The dense fog, which had changed to a thin, transparent mist, lingered a little on the mountain-sides, then vanished quite away. Except in the black clefts of the hills, no vestige of it stayed. The lake was as liquid silver; the mountains were gold, bearing forests that were like flames of fire. My heart was filled with wonder and gratitude.

As our boat crept on I observed that the lake filled a long, narrow basin. On our right the cliffs rose to a great height, their tops covered with pines, but to the

left and in front lay a pleasant land, where stood a large building. This was Saint Bartholomæ, the summer residence of his Reverence, Superior Andreas.

This garden spot was of no great extent: it was shut in on all sides but that upon which the lake lay by cliffs that rose a thousand feet into the air. High in the front of this awful wall was set a green meadow, which seemed like a great jewel gleaming upon the gray cloak of the mountain. My guide pointed it out as the only place in all that region where the edelweiss grew. This, then, was the very place where Benedicta had culled the lovely flowers that she had brought to me during my penance. I gazed upward to that beautiful but terrible spot with feelings that I have no words to express. The youth, his mood sympathetic with the now joyous aspect of nature, shouted and sang, but I felt the hot tears rise into my eyes and flow down upon my cheeks, and concealed my face in my cowl.

21

After leaving the boat we climbed the mountain. Dear Lord, nothing comes from Thy hand without a purpose and a use, but why Thou shouldst have piled up these mountains, and why Thou shouldst have covered them with so many stones, is a mystery to me, since I can see no purpose in stones, which are a blessing to neither man nor beast.

After hours of climbing we reached a spring, where I sat down, faint and footsore and out of breath. As I looked about me the scene fully justified all that I had been told of these high solitudes. Wherever I turned my eyes was nothing but gray, bare rocks streaked with red and yellow and brown. There were dreary wastes of stones where nothing grew – no single plant nor blade of grass – dreadful abysses filled with ice, and glittering snowfields sloping upward till they seemed to touch the sky.

Among the rocks I did, however, find a few flowers. It seemed as if the Creator of this wild and desolate region had Himself found it too horrible, and, reaching down to the valleys, had gathered a handful of flowers and scattered them in the barren places. These flowers, so distinguished by the Divine hand, have bloomed with a celestial beauty that none others know. The boy pointed out the plant whose root I am to dig, as well as several strong and wholesome herbs serviceable to man, among them the golden-flowered arnica.

After an hour we continued our journey, which we pursued until I was hardly able to drag my feet along the path. At last we reached a lonely spot surrounded by great black rocks. In the centre was a miserable hut of stones, with a low opening in one side for an entrance, and this, the youth told me, was to be my habitation. We entered, and my heart sank to think of dwelling in such a place. There was no furniture of

any kind. A wide bench, on which was some dry Alpine grass, was to be my bed. There was a fireplace, with some wood for fuel, and a few simple cooking-utensils.

The boy took up a pan and ran away with it, and, throwing myself down in front of the hut, I was soon lost in contemplation of the wildness and terror of the place in which I was to prepare my soul for service of the Lord. The boy soon returned, bearing the pan in both hands, and on seeing me he gave a joyful shout, whose echoes sounded like a hundred voices babbling among the rocks on every side. After even so short a period of solitude I was so happy to see a human face that I came near answering his greeting with unbecoming joy. How, then, could I hope to sustain a week of isolation in that lonely spot?

When the boy placed the pan before me it was full of milk, and he brought forth from his clothing a pat of yellow butter, prettily adorned with Alpine flowers, and a cake of snow-white cheese wrapped in aromatic herbs. The sight delighted me, and I asked him, jokingly:

'Do butter and cheese, then, grow on stones up here, and have you found a spring of milk?'

'You might accomplish such a miracle," he replied, 'but I prefer to hasten to the Black Lake and ask this food of the young women who live there.'

He then got some flour from a kind of pantry in the hut, and, having kindled a fire on the hearth, proceeded to make a cake.

'Then we are not alone in this wilderness,' I said. 'Tell me where is that lake on the shore of which these generous people dwell?'

'The Black Lake,' he replied, blinking his eyes, which were full of smoke, 'is behind that *Kogel* yonder, and the dairy-house stands on the edge of the cliff above the water. It is a bad place. The lake reaches clear down to Hell, and you can hear, through the fissures of the rocks, the roaring and hissing of the flames and the groans of the souls. And in no other place in all this world are there so many fierce and evil spirits. Beware of it! You might fall ill there in spite of your sanctity. Milk and butter and cheese can be obtained at the Green Lake lower down; but I will tell the women to send up what you require. They will be glad to oblige you; and if you will preach them a sermon every Sunday, they will fight the very devil for you!'

After our meal, which I thought the sweetest I had ever eaten, the boy stretched himself in the sunshine and straightway fell asleep, snoring so loudly that, tired as I was, I could hardly follow his example.

22

When I awoke the sun was already behind the mountains, whose tops were fringed with fire. I felt as one in a dream, but was soon recalled to my senses, and made to feel that I was alone in the wilderness by shouts of

the young man in the distance. Doubtless he had pitied my condition, for, instead of disturbing me, he had gone away without taking leave, being compelled to reach the dairy on the Green Lake before nightfall. Entering the cabin, I found a fire burning lustily and a quantity of fuel piled beside it. Nor had the thoughtful youth forgotten to prepare my supper of bread and milk. He had also shaken up the grass on my hard bed, and covered it with a woollen cloth, for which I was truly grateful to him.

Refreshed by my long sleep, I remained outside the cabin till late in the evening. I said my prayers in view of the gray rocks beneath the black sky, in which the stars blinked merrily. They seemed much more brilliant up here than when seen from the valley, and it was easy to imagine that, standing on the extreme summit, one might touch them with his hands.

Many hours of that night I passed under the sky and the stars, examining my conscience and questioning my heart. I felt as if in church, kneeling before the altar and feeling the awful presence of the Lord. And at last my soul was filled with a divine peace, and as an innocent child presses its mother's breast, even so I leaned my head upon thine, O Nature, mother of us all!

23

I HAD not before seen a dawn so glorious! The moun-

tains were rose-red, and seemed almost transparent. The atmosphere was of a silvery lucidity, and so fresh and pure that with every breath I seemed to be taking new life. The dew, heavy and white, clung to the scanty grass-blades like rain and dripped from the sides of the rocks.

It was while engaged in my morning devotions that I involuntarily became acquainted with my neighbours. All night long the marmots had squealed, greatly to my dismay, and they were now capering to and fro like hares. Overhead the brown hawks sailed in circles with an eye to the birds flitting among the bushes and the wood-mice racing along the rocks. Now and again a troop of chamois passed near, on their way to the feeding-grounds on the cliffs, and high above all I saw a single eagle rising into the sky, higher and higher, as a soul flies heavenward when purged of sin.

I was still kneeling when the silence was broken by the sound of voices. I looked about, but, although I could distinctly hear the voices and catch snatches of song, I saw no one. The sounds seemed to come from the heart of the mountain and, remembering the malevolent powers that infest the place, I repeated a prayer against the Evil One and awaited the event.

Again the singing was heard, ascending from a deep chasm, and presently I saw rising out of it three female figures. As soon as they saw me they ceased singing and uttered shrill screams By this sign I knew them to be

daughters of the earth, and thought they might be Christians, and so waited for them to approach.

As they drew near I observed that they carried baskets on their heads, and that they were tall, good-looking lasses, light-haired, brown in complexion and black-eyed. Setting their baskets upon the ground, they greeted me humbly and kissed my hands, after which they opened the baskets and displayed the good things they had brought me – milk, cream, cheese, butter and cakes.

Seating themselves upon the ground, they told me they were from the Green Lake, and said they were glad to have a 'mountain brother' again, especially so young and handsome a one; and in saying so there were merry twinkles in their dark eyes and smiles on their red lips, which pleased me exceedingly.

I inquired if they were not afraid to live in the wilderness, at which they laughed, showing their white teeth. They said they had a hunter's gun in their cabin to keep off bears, and knew several powerful sentences and anathemas against demons. Nor were they very lonely, they added, for every Saturday the boys from the valley came up to hunt wild beasts, and then all made merry. I learned from them that meadows and cabins were common among the rocks, where herdsmen and herdswomen lived during the whole summer. The finest meadows, they said, belonged to the monastery, and lay but a short distance away.

The pleasant chatting of the maidens greatly delighted me, and the solitude began to be less oppressive. Having received the benediction, they kissed my hand and went away as they had come, laughing, singing and shouting in the joy of youth and health. So much I have already observed: the people in the mountains lead a better and happier life than those in the damp, deep valleys below. Also, they seem purer in heart and mind, and that may be due to their living so much nearer to Heaven, which some of the brothers say approaches more closely to the earth here than at any other place in the world excepting Rome.

24

The maidens having gone, I stowed away the provisions which they had brought me, and, taking a short pointed spade and a bag, went in search of the gentiana roots. They grew in abundance, and my back soon began to ache from stooping and digging; but I continued the labour, for I desired to send a good quantity to the monastery to attest my zeal and obedience. I had gone a long distance from my cabin without observing the direction which I had taken, when suddenly I found myself on the brink of an abyss so deep and terrible that I recoiled with a cry of horror. At the bottom of this chasm, so far below my feet that I was giddy to look down, a small circular lake was visible, like the eye of a

fiend. On the shore of it, near a cliff overhanging the water, stood a cabin, from the stone-weighted roof of which rose a thin column of blue smoke. About the cabin, in the narrow and sterile pasture, a few cows and sheep were grazing. What a dreadful place for a human habitation!

I was still gazing down with fear into this gulf when I was again startled: I heard a voice distinctly call a name! The sound came from behind me, and the name was uttered with so caressing sweetness that I hastened to cross myself as a protection from the wiles of the fairies with their spells and enchantments. Soon I heard the voice again, and this time it caused my heart to beat so that I was near suffocation, for it was Benedicta's! Benedicta in this wilderness, and I alone with her! Surely I now had need of thy guidance, blessed Franciscus, to keep my feet in the path of the Divine purpose.

I turned about and saw her. She was now springing from rock to rock, looking backward and calling the name that was strange to me. When she saw that I looked at her she stood motionless. I walked to her, greeting her in the name of the Blessed Virgin, though, God forgive me! hardly able in the tumult of my emotions to articulate that holy title.

Ah, how changed the poor child was! The lovely face was as pale as marble; the large eyes were sunken and inexpressibly sad. Her beautiful hair alone was unaltered, flowing over her shoulders like threads of

gold. We stood looking at each other, silent from surprise; then I again addressed her:

'Is it, then, you, Benedicta, who live in the cabin down there by the Black Lake – near the waters of Avernus? And is your father with you?'

She made no reply, but I observed a quivering about her delicate mouth, as when a child endeavours to refrain from weeping. I repeated my question: 'Is your father with you?'

She answered faintly, in a tone that was hardly more than a sigh:

'My father is dead.'

I felt a sudden pain in my very heart, and was for some moments unable to speak further, quite overcome by compassion. Benedicta had turned away her face to hide her tears, and her fragile frame was shaken by her sobs. I could no longer restrain myself. Stepping up to her, I took her hand in mine, and, trying to crush back into my secret heart every human desire, and address her in words of religious consolation, said:

'My child – dear Benedicta – your father is gone from you, but another Father remains who will protect you every day of your life. And as far as may accord with His holy will I, too, good and beautiful maiden, help you to endure your great affliction. He whom you mourn is not lost; he is gone to the mercy seat, and God will be gracious to him.'

But my words seemed only to awaken her sleeping

grief. She threw herself upon the ground and gave way to her tears, sobbing so violently that I was filled with alarm. O Mother of Mercy! how can I bear the memory of the anguish I suffered in seeing this beautiful and innocent child overwhelmed with so great a flood of grief? I bent over her, and my own tears fell upon her golden hair. My heart urged me to lift her from the earth, but my hands were powerless to move. At length she composed herself somewhat and spoke, but as if she were talking to herself rather than to me:

'Oh, my father, my poor, heart-broken father! Yes, he is dead – they killed him – he died long ago of grief. My beautiful mother, too, died of grief – of grief and remorse for some great sin, I know not what, which he had forgiven her. He could only be compassionate and merciful. His heart was too tender to let him kill a worm or a beetle, and he was compelled to kill men. His father and his father's father had lived and died in the Galgenberg. They were hangmen all, and the awful inheritance fell to him: there was no escape, for the terrible people held him to the trade. I have heard him say that he was often tempted to kill himself, and but for me I am sure he would have done so. He could not leave me to starve, though he had to see me reviled, and at last, O Holy Virgin! publicly disgraced for that of which I was not guilty.'

As Benedicta made this reference to the great injustice that she had been made to suffer, her white

cheeks kindled to crimson with the recollection of the shame which for her father's sake she had, at the time of it, so differently endured.

During the narrative of her grief she had partly risen and had turned her beautiful face more and more toward me as her confidence had grown; but now she veiled it with her hair, and would have turned her back but that I gently prevented her and spoke some words of comfort, though God knows my own heart was near breaking through sympathy with hers. After a few moments she resumed:

'Alas, my poor father! he was unhappy every way. Not even the comfort of seeing his child baptised was granted him. I was a hangman's daughter, and my parents were forbidden to present me for baptism; nor could any priest be found who was willing to bless me in the name of the Holy Trinity. So they gave me the name Benedicta, and blessed me themselves, over and over again.

'I was only an infant when my beautiful mother died. They buried her in unconsecrated ground. She could not go to the Heavenly Father in the mansions above, but was thrust into the flames. While she was dying my father had hastened to the Reverend Superior, imploring him to send a priest with the sacrament. His prayer was denied. No priest came, and my poor father closed her eyes himself, while his own were blind with tears of anguish for her terrible fate.

'And all alone he had to dig her grave. He had no other place than near the gallows, where he had so often buried the hanged and the accurst. With his own hands he had to place her in that unholy ground, nor could any masses be said for her suffering soul.

'I well remember how my dear father took me then to the image of the Holy Virgin and bade me kneel, and, joining my little hands, taught me to pray for my poor mother, who had stood undefended before the terrible Judge of the Dead. This I have done every morning and evening since that day, and now I pray for both; for my father also has died unshriven, and his soul is not with God, but burns in unceasing fire.

'When he was dying I ran to the Superior, just as he had done for my dear mother. I besought him on my knees. I prayed and wept and embraced his feet, and would have kissed his hand but that he snatched it away. He commanded me to go.'

As Benedicta proceeded with her narrative she gained courage. She rose to her feet and stood erect, threw back her beautiful head and lifted her eyes to the heavens as if recounting her wrongs to God's high angels and ministers of doom. She stretched forth her bare arms in gestures of so natural force and grace that I was filled with astonishment, and her unstudied words came from her lips with an eloquence of which I had never before had any conception. I dare not think it inspiration, for, God forgive us all! every word was

an unconscious arraignment of Him and His Holy Church; yet surely no mortal with lips untouched by a live coal from the altar ever so spake before! In the presence of this strange and gifted being I so felt my own unworth that I had surely knelt, as before a blessed saint, but that she suddenly concluded, with a pathos that touched me to tears.

'The cruel people killed him,' she said, with a sob in the heart of every word. 'They laid hands upon me whom he loved. They charged me falsely with a foul crime. They attired me in a garment of dishonour, and put a crown of straw upon my head, and hung about my neck the black tablet of shame. They spat upon me and reviled me, and compelled him to lead me to the pillory, where I was bound and struck with whips and stones. That broke his great, good heart, and so he died, and I am alone.'

25

When Benedicta had finished I remained silent, for in the presence of such a sorrow what could I say? For such wounds as hers religion has no balm. As I thought of the cruel wrongs of this humble and harmless family there came into my heart a feeling of wild rebellion against the world, against the Church, against God! They were brutally unjust, horribly, devilishly unjust! – God, the Church, and the world.

Our very surroundings – the stark and soulless wilderness, perilous with precipices and bleak with everlasting snows – seemed a visible embodiment of the woeful life to which the poor child had been condemned from birth; and truly this was more than fancy, for since her father's death had deprived her of even so humble a home as the hangman's hovel she had been driven to these eternal solitudes by the stress of want. But below us were pleasant villages, fertile fields, green gardens, and homes where peace and plenty abided all the year.

After a time, when Benedicta was somewhat composed, I asked her if she had anyone with her for protection.

'I have none,' she replied. But observing my look of pain, she added: 'I have always lived in lonely, accurst places; I am accustomed to that. Now that my father is dead, there is no one who cares even to speak to me, nor any whom I care to talk with – except you.' After a pause she said: 'True, there is one who cares to see me, but he – '

Here she broke off, and I did not press her to explain lest it should embarrass her. Presently she said:

'I knew yesterday that you were here. A boy came for some milk and butter for you. If you were not a holy man the boy would not have come to me for your food. As it is, you cannot be harmed by the evil which attaches to everything I have or do. Are you sure,

though, that you made the sign of the cross over the food yesterday?'

'Had I known that it came from you, Benedicta, that precaution would have been omitted,' I answered.

She looked at me with beaming eyes, and said:

'Oh, dear sir, dear Brother!'

And both the look and the words gave me the keenest delight – as, in truth, do all this saintly creature's words and ways.

I inquired what had brought her to the cliff-top, and who the person was that I had heard her calling.

'It is no person,' she answered, smiling; 'it is only my goat. She has strayed away, and I was searching for her among the rocks.'

Then nodding to me as if about to say farewell, she turned to go, but I detained her, saying that I would assist her to look for the goat.

We soon discovered the animal in a crevice of rock, and so glad was Benedicta to find her humble companion that she knelt by its side, put her arms about its neck and called it by many endearing names. I thought this very charming, and could not help looking upon the group with obvious admiration. Benedicta, observing it, said:

'Her mother fell from a cliff and broke her neck. I took the little one and brought it up on milk, and she is very fond of me. One who lives alone as I do values the love of a faithful animal.'

When the maiden was about to leave me I gained

courage to speak to her of what had been so long in my mind. I said: 'It is true, is it not, Benedicta, that on the night of the festival you went to meet the drunken boys in order to save your father from harm?'

She looked at me in great astonishment. 'For what other reason could you suppose I went?'

'I could not think of any other,' I replied, in some confusion.

'And now good-bye, Brother,' she said, moving away.

'Benedicta,' I cried. She paused and turned her head.

'Next Sunday I shall preach to the dairy women at the Green Lake; will you come?'

'Oh, no, dear Brother,' she replied hesitating and in low tones.

'You will not come?'

'I should like to come, but my presence would frighten away the dairy women and others whom your goodness would bring there to hear you. Your charity to me would cause you trouble. I pray you, sir, accept thanks, but I cannot come.'

'Then I shall come to you.'

'Beware, oh pray, beware!'

'I shall come.'

26

The boy had taught me how to prepare a cake. I knew all that went to the making of it, and the right pro-

portions, yet when I tried to make it I could not. All that I was able to make was a smoky, greasy pap, more fit for the mouth of Satan than for a pious son of the Church and follower of Saint Franciscus. My failure greatly discouraged me, yet it did not destroy my appetite; so, taking some stale bread, I dipped it in sour milk and was about to make my stomach do penance for its many sins, when Benedicta came with a basketful of good things from her dairy. Ah, the dear child! I fear that it was not with my heart only that I greeted her that blessed morning.

Observing the smoky mass in the pan, she smiled, and quietly throwing it to the birds (which may Heaven guard!) she cleansed the pan at the spring, and, returning arranged the fire. She then prepared the material for a fresh cake. Taking two handfuls of flour, she put it into an earthen bowl, and upon the top of it poured a cup of cream. Adding a pinch of salt, she mixed the whole vigorously with her slender white hands until it became a soft, swelling dough. She next greased the pan with a piece of yellow butter, and, pouring the dough into it, placed it on the fire. When the heat had penetrated the dough, causing it to expand and rise above the sides of the pan, she deftly pierced it here and there that it should not burst, and when it was well browned she took it up and set it before me, all unworthy as I was. I invited her to share the meal with me, but she would not. She insisted, too, that I should cross

myself before partaking of anything that she had brought me or prepared, lest some evil come to me because of the ban upon her; but this I would not consent to do. While I ate she culled flowers from among the rocks, and, making a wreath, hung it upon the cross in front of the cabin; after which, when I had finished, she employed herself in cleansing the dishes and arranging everything in order as it should be, so that I imagined myself far more comfortable than before, even in merely looking about me. When there was nothing more to be done, and my conscience would not permit me to invent reasons for detaining her, she went away, and O my Saviour! how dismal and dreary seemed the day when she was gone. Ah, Benedicta, Benedicta, what is this that thou hast done to me? – making that sole service of the Lord to which I am dedicated seem less happy and less holy than a herdsman's humble life here in the wilderness with thee!

27

Life up here is less disagreeable than I thought. What seemed to me a dreary solitude seems now less dismal and desolate. This mountain wilderness, which at first filled me with awe, gradually reveals its benign character. It is marvellously beautiful in its grandeur, with a beauty which purifies and elevates the soul. One can read in it, as in a book, the praises of its Creator. Daily,

while digging gentiana roots, I do not fail to listen to the voice of the wilderness and to compose and chasten my soul more and more.

In these mountains are no feathered songsters. The birds here utter only shrill cries. The flowers, too, are without fragrance, but wondrously beautiful, shining with the fire and gold of stars. I have seen slopes and heights here which doubtless were never trodden by any human foot. They seem to me sacred, the touch of the Creator still visible upon them, as when they came from His hand.

Game is in great abundance. Chamois are sometimes seen in such droves that the very hillsides seem, to move. There are steinbocks, veritable monsters, but as yet, thank Heaven, I have seen no bears. Marmots play about me like kittens, and eagles, the grandest creatures in this high world, nest in the cliffs to be as near the sky as they can get.

When fatigued, I stretch myself on the Alpine grass, which is as fragrant as the most precious spices. I close my eyes and hear the wind whisper through the tall stems, and in my heart is peace. Blessed be the Lord!

28

Every morning the dairy women come to my cabin, their merry shouts ringing in the air and echoed from the hills. They bring fresh milk, butter and cheese, chat

a little while and go away. Each day they relate something new that has occurred in the mountains or been reported from the villages below. They are joyous and happy, and look forward with delight to Sunday, when there will be divine service in the morning and a dance in the evening.

Alas, these happy people are not free of the sin of bearing false witness against their neighbour. They have spoken to me of Benedicta – called her a disgraceful wench, a hangman's daughter and (my heart rebels against its utterance) the mistress of Rochus! The pillory, they said, was made for such as she.

Hearing these maidens talk so bitterly and falsely of one whom they so little knew, it was with difficulty that I mastered my indignation. But in pity of their ignorance I reprimanded them gently and kindly. It was wrong, I said, to condemn a fellow-being unheard. It was unchristian to speak ill of any one.

They do not understand. It surprises them that I defend a person like Benedicta – one who, as they truly say, has been publicly disgraced and has not a friend in the world.

29

This morning I visited the Black Lake. It is indeed an awful and accursed place, fit for the habitation of the damned. And there lives the poor forsaken child!

Approaching the cabin, I could see a fire burning on the hearth, and over it was suspended a kettle. Benedicta was seated on a low stool, looking into the flames. Her face was illuminated with a crimson glow, and I could observe heavy tear-drops on her cheeks.

Not wishing to see her secret sorrow, I hastened to make known my presence, and addressed her as gently as I could. She was startled, but when she saw who it was, smiled and blushed. She rose and came to greet me, and I began speaking to her almost at random, in order that she might recover her composure. I spoke as a brother might speak to his sister, yet earnestly, for my heart was full of compassion.

'O Benedicta,' I said, 'I know your heart, and it has more love for that wild youth Rochus than for our dear and blessed Saviour. I know how willingly you bore infamy and disgrace, sustained by the thought that he knew you innocent. Far be it from me to condemn you, for what is holier or purer than a maiden's love? I would only warn and save you from the consequence of having given it to one so unworthy.'

She listened with her head bowed, and said nothing, but I could hear her sighs. I saw, too, that she trembled. I continued:

'Benedicta, the passion which fills your heart may prove your destruction in this life and hereafter. Young Rochus is not one who will make you his wife in the sight of God and Man. Why did he not

stand forth and defend you when you were falsely accused?'

'He was not there,' she said, lifting her eyes to mine; 'he and his father were at Salbzurg. He knew nothing till they told him.'

May God forgive me if at this I felt no joy in another's acquittal of the heavy sin with which I had charged him. I stood a moment irresolute, with my head bowed, silent.

'But, Benedicta,' I resumed, 'will he take for a wife one whose good name has been blackened in the sight of his family and his neighbours? No, he does not seek you with an honourable purpose. O Benedicta, confide in me. Is it not as I say?'

But she remained silent, nor could I draw from her a single word. She would only sigh and tremble; she seemed unable to speak. I saw that she was too weak to resist the temptation to love young Rochus; nay, I saw that her whole heart was bound up in him, and my soul melted with pity and sorrow – pity for her and sorrow for myself, for I felt that my power was unequal to the command that had been laid upon me. My agony was so keen that I could hardly refrain from crying out.

I went from her cabin, but did not return to my own. I wandered about the haunted shore of the Black Lake for hours, without aim or purpose.

Reflecting bitterly upon my failure, and beseeching

God for greater grace and strength, it was revealed to me that I was an unworthy disciple of the Lord and a faithless son of the Church. I became more keenly conscious than I ever had been before of the earthly nature of my love for Benedicta, and of its sinfulness. I felt that I had not given my whole heart to God, but was clinging to a temporal and human hope. It was plain to me that unless my love for the sweet child should be changed to a purely spiritual affection, purified from all the dross of passion, I could never receive holy orders, but should remain always a monk and always a sinner. These reflections caused me great torment, and in my despair I cast myself down upon the earth, calling aloud to my Saviour. In this my greatest trial I clung to the Cross. 'Save me, O Lord!' I cried. 'I am engulfed in a great passion – save me, oh, save me, or I perish forever!'

All that night I struggled and prayed and fought against the evil spirits in my soul, with their suggestions of recreancy to the dear Church whose child I am.

'The Church,' they whispered, 'has servants enough. You are not as yet irrevocably bound to celibacy. You can procure a dispensation from your monastic vows and remain here in the mountains, a layman. You can learn the craft of the hunter or the herdsman, and be ever near Benedicta to guard and guide her – perhaps in time to win her love from Rochus and take her for your wife.'

To these temptations I opposed my feeble strength and such aid as the blessed Saint gave me in my great trial. The contest was long and agonising, and more than once, there in the darkness and the wilderness, which rang with my cries, I was near surrender; but at the dawning of the day I became more tranquil, and peace once more filled my heart, even as the golden light filled the great gorges of the mountain where but a few moments before were the darkness and the mist. I thought then of the suffering and death of our Saviour, who died for the redemption of the world, and most fervently I prayed that Heaven would grant me the great boon to die likewise, in a humbler way, even though it were for but one suffering being – Benedicta.

May the Lord hear my prayer!

30

The night before the Sunday on which I was to hold divine service great fires were kindled on the cliffs – a signal for the young men in the valley to come up to the mountain dairies. They came in great numbers, shouting and screaming, and were greeted with songs and shrill cries by the dairy maidens, who swung flaming torches that lit up the faces of the great rocks and sent gigantic shadows across them. It was a beautiful sight. These are indeed a happy people.

The monastery boy came in with the rest. He will

remain over Sunday, and, returning, will take back the roots that I have dug. He gave me much news from the monastery. The reverend Superior is living at Saint Bartholomæ, fishing and hunting. Another thing – one which gives me great alarm – is that the Salt-master's son, young Rochus, is in the mountains not far from the Black Lake. It seems he has a hunting-lodge on the upper cliff, and a path leads from it directly to the lake. The boy told me this, but did not observe how I trembled when hearing it. Would that an angel with a flaming sword might guard the path to the lake, and to Benedicta !

The shouting and singing continued during the whole night, and between this and the agitation in my soul I did not close my eyes. Early the next morning the boys and girls arrived in crowds from all directions. The maidens wore silken kerchiefs twisted prettily about their heads, and had decorated themselves and their escorts with flowers.

Not being an ordained priest, it was not permitted me either to read mass or to preach a sermon, but I prayed with them and spoke to them whatever my aching heart found to say. I spoke to them of our sinfulness and God's great mercy; of our harshness to one another and the Saviour's love for us all; of His infinite compassion. As my words echoed from the abyss below and the heights above I felt as if I were lifted out of this world of suffering and sin and borne away on

angel's wings to the radiant spheres beyond the sky! It was a solemn service, and my little congregation was awed into devotion and seemed to feel as if it stood in the Holy of Holies.

The service being concluded, I blessed the people and they quietly went away. They had not been long gone before I heard the lads send forth ringing shouts, but this did not displease me. Why should they not rejoice? Is not cheerfulness the purest praise a human heart can give?

In the afternoon I went down to Benedicta's cabin and found her at the door, making a wreath of edelweiss for the image of the Blessed Virgin, intertwining the snowy flowers with a purple blossom that looked like blood.

Seating myself beside her, I looked on at her beautiful work in silence, but in my soul was a wild tumult of emotion and a voice that cried: 'Benedicta, my love, my soul, I love you more than life! I love you above all things on earth and in Heaven!'

31

THE Superior sent for me, and with a strange foreboding I followed his messenger down the difficult way to the lake and embarked in the boat. Occupied with gloomy reflections and presentiments of impending evil, I hardly observed that we had left the shore before

the sound of merry voices apprised me of our arrival at St. Bartholomæ. On the beautiful meadow surrounding the dwelling of the Superior were a great number of people – priests, friars, mountaineers and hunters. Many were there who had come from afar with large retinues of servants and boys. In the house was a great bustle – a confusion and a hurrying to and fro, as during a fair. The doors stood wide open, and people ran in and out, clamouring noisily. The dogs yelped and howled as loud as they could. On a stand under the oak was a great cask of beer, and many of the people were gathered about it, drinking. Inside the house, too, there seemed to be much drinking, for I saw many men near the windows with mighty cups in their hands. On entering, I encountered throngs of servants carrying dishes of fish and game. I asked one of them when I could see the Superior. He answered that His Reverence would be down immediately after the meal, and I concluded to wait in the hall. The walls were hung with pictures of some large fish which had been caught in the lake. Below each picture the weight of the monster and the date of its capture, together with the name of the person taking it, were inscribed in large letters. I could not help interpreting these records – perhaps uncharitably – as intimations to all good Christians to pray for the souls of those whose names were inscribed.

After more than an hour the Superior descended

the stairs. I stepped forward, saluting him humbly, as became my position. He nodded, eyed me sharply, and directed me to go to his apartment immediately after supper. This I did.

'How about your soul, my son Ambrosius?" he asked me, solemnly. 'Has the Lord shown you grace? Have you endured the probation?'

Humbly, with my head bowed, I answered:

'Most reverend Father, God in my solitude has given me knowledge.'

'Of what? Of your guilt?'

This I affirmed.

'Praise be to God!' exclaimed the Superior. 'I knew, my son, that solitude would speak to your soul with the tongue of an angel. I have good tidings for you. I have written in your behalf to the Bishop of Salzburg. He summons you to his palace. He will consecrate you and give you holy orders in person, and you will remain in his city. Prepare yourself, for in three days you are to leave us.'

The Superior looked sharply into my face again, but I did not permit him to see into my heart. I asked for his benediction, bowed and left him. Ah, then, it was for this that I was summoned! I am to go away forever. I must leave my very life behind me; I must renounce my care and protection of Benedicta. God help her and me!

32

I am once more in my mountain home, but to-morrow I leave it forever. But why am I sad? Does not a great blessing await me? Have I not ever looked forward to the moment of my consecration with longing, believing it would bring me the supreme happiness of my life? And now that this great joy is almost within my grasp, I am sad beyond measure.

Can I approach the altar of the Lord with a lie on my lips? Can I receive the holy sacrament as an impostor? The holy oil upon my forehead would turn to fire and burn into my brain, and I should be for ever damned.

I might fall upon my knees before the Bishop and say: 'Expel me, for I do not seek after the love of Christ, nor after holy and heavenly things, but after the things of this world.'

If I so spoke, I should be punished, but I could endure that without a murmur.

If only I were sinless and could rightly become a priest, I could be of great service to the poor child. I should be able to give her infinite blessings and consolations. I could be her confessor and absolve her from sin, and, if I should outlive her – which God forbid! – might by my prayers even redeem her soul from Purgatory. I could read masses for the souls of her poor dead parents, already in torment.

Above all, if I succeeded in preserving her from that one great and destructive sin for which she secretly longs; if I could take her with me and place her under thy protection, O Blessed Virgin, that would be happiness indeed.

But where is the sanctuary that would receive the hangman's daughter? I know it but too well: when I am gone from here, the Evil One, in the winning shape he has assumed, will prevail, and she will be lost in time and in eternity.

33

I have been at Benedicta's cabin.

'Benedicta,' I said, 'I am going away from here – away from the mountains – away from you.'

She grew pale, but said nothing. For a moment I was overcome with emotion; I seemed to choke, and could not continue. Presently I said: 'Poor child, what will become of you? I know that your love for Rochus is strong and, love is like a torrent which nothing can stay. There is no safety for you but in clinging to the cross of our Saviour. Promise me that you will do so – do not let me go away in misery, Benedicta.'

'Am I, then, so wicked?' she said, without lifting her eyes from the ground. 'Can I not be trusted?'

'Ah, but, Benedicta, the enemy is strong, and you

have a traitor to unbar the gates. Your own heart, poor child, will at last betray you.'

'He will not harm me,' she murmured. 'You wrong him, sir, indeed you do.'

But I knew that I did not, and was all the more concerned to judge that the wolf would use the arts of the fox. Before the sacred purity of this maiden the base passions of the youth had not dared to declare themselves. But none the less I knew that an hour would come when she would have need of all her strength, and it would fail her. I grasped her arm and demanded that she take an oath that she would throw herself into the waters of the Black Lake rather than into the arms of Rochus. But she would not reply. She remained silent, her eyes fixed upon mine with a look of sadness and reproach which filled my mind with the most melancholy thoughts, and, turning away, I left her.

34

Lord, Saviour of my soul, whither hast Thou led me? Here am I in the culprit's tower, a condemned murderer, and to-morrow at sunrise I shall be taken to the gallows and hanged! For whoso slays a fellow being, he shall be slain; that is the law of God and man.

On this the last day of my life I have asked that I be permitted to write, and my prayer is granted. In

the name of God and in the truth I shall now set down all that occurred.

Leaving Benedicta, I returned to my cabin, and, having packed everything, waited for the boy. But he did not come: I should have to remain in the mountains another night. I grew restless. The cabin seemed too narrow to hold me; the air was too heavy and hot to sustain life. Going outside, I lay upon a rock and looked up at the sky, dark and glittering with stars. But my soul was not in the heavens; it was at the cabin by the Black Lake.

Suddenly I heard a faint, distant cry, like a human voice. I sat upright and listened, but all was still. It may have been, I thought, the note of some night-bird. I was about to lie down again, when the cry was repeated, but it seemed to come from another direction. It was the voice of Benedicta! It sounded again, and now it seemed to come from the air – from the sky above my head, and distinctly it called my name; but, O Mother of God, what anguish was in those tones!

I leapt from the rock. 'Benedicta, Benedicta!' I cried aloud. There was no reply.

'Benedicta, I am coming to thee, child!'

I sprang away in the darkness, along the path to the Black Lake. I ran and leapt, stumbling and falling over rocks and stumps of trees. My limbs were bruised, my clothing was torn, but I gave no heed; Benedicta was in distress, and I alone could save and guard her.

I rushed on until I reached the Black Lake. But at the cabin all was quiet; there was neither light nor sound; everything was as peaceful as a house of God.

After waiting a long time I left. The voice that I had heard calling me could not have been Benedicta's, but must have been that of some evil spirit mocking me in my great sorrow. I meant to return to my cabin, but an invisible hand directed my steps another way; and although it led me to my death, I know it to have been the hand of the Lord.

Walking on, hardly knowing whither, and unable to find the path by which I had descended, I found myself at the foot of a precipice. Here was a narrow path leading steeply upward along the face of the cliff, and I began ascending it. After I had gone up some distance I looked above, and saw outlined against the starry sky a cabin perched upon the very verge. It flashed through my mind that this was the hunting-lodge of the Saltmaster's son, and this the path by which he visited Benedicta. Merciful Father! he, Rochus, was certain to come this way; there could be no other. I would wait for him here.

I crouched in the shadow and waited, thinking what to say to him and imploring the Lord for inspiration to change his heart and turn him from his evil purpose.

Before long I heard him approaching from above. I heard the stones displaced by his foot roll down the steep slopes and leap into the lake far below. Then I

prayed God that if I should be unable to soften the youth's heart he might miss his footing and fall, too, like the stones; for it would be better that he should meet a sudden and impenitent death, and his soul be lost, than that he should live to destroy the soul of an innocent girl.

Turning at an angle of the rock, he stood directly before me as, rising, I stepped into the faint light of the new moon. He knew me at once, and in a haughty tone asked me what I wanted.

I replied mildly, explaining why I had barred his way, and begging him to go back. He insulted and derided me.

'You miserable cowler,' he said, 'will you never cease meddling in my affairs? Because the mountain maids are so foolish as to praise your white teeth and your big black eyes, must you fancy yourself a man, and not a monk? You are no more to women than a goat!'

I begged him to desist and to listen to me. I threw myself on my knees and implored him, however he might despise me and my humble though holy station, to respect Benedicta and spare her. But he pushed me from him with his foot upon my breast. No longer master of myself, I sprang erect, and called him an assassin and a villain.

At this he pulled a dagger from his belt, saying: 'I will send you to Hell!'

Quick as a flash of lightning my hand was upon his wrist. I wrested the knife from him and flung it behind me, crying: 'Not with weapons, but unarmed and equal, we will fight to the death, and the Lord shall decide!'

We sprang upon each other with the fury of wild animals, and were instantly locked together with arms and hands. We struggled upward and downward along the path, with the great wall of rock on one side, and on the other the precipice, the abyss, the waters of the Black Lake! We writhed and strained for the advantage, but the Lord was against me for He permitted my enemy to overcome me and throw me down on the edge of the precipice. I was in the grasp of a strong enemy, whose eyes glowed like coals of fire. His knee was on my breast and my head hung over the edge – my life was in his hands. I thought he would push me over, but he made no attempt to do so. He held me there between life and death for a dreadful time, then said, in a low, hissing voice: 'You see, monk, if I but move I can hurl you down the abyss like a stone. But I care not to take your life, for it is no impediment to me. The girl belongs to me, and to me you shall leave her; do you understand?'

With that he rose and left me, going down the path toward the lake. His footfalls had long died away in the silent night before I was able to move hand or foot. Great God! I surely did not deserve such defeat,

humiliation and pain. I had but wished to save a soul, yet Heaven permitted me to be conquered by him who would destroy it!

Finally I was able to rise, although in great pain, for I was bruised by my fall, and could still feel the fierce youth's knee upon my breast and his fingers about my throat. I walked with difficulty back along the path, downward toward the lake. Wounded as I was, I would return to Benedicta's cabin and interpose my body between her and harm. But my progress was slow, and I had frequently to rest; yet it was near dawn before I gave up the effort, convinced that I should be too late to do the poor child the small service of yielding up my remnant of life in her defence.

At early dawn I heard Rochus returning, with a merry song upon his lips. I concealed myself behind a rock, though not in fear, and he passed without seeing me.

At this point there was a break in the wall of the cliff, the path crossing a great crevice that clove the mountain as by a sword-stroke from the arm of a Titan. The bottom was strewn with loose boulders and overgrown with brambles and shrubs, through which trickled a slender stream of water fed by the melting snows above. Here I remained for three days and two nights. I heard the boy from the monastery calling my name as he traversed the path searching for me, but I made no answer. Not once did I quench my burning

thirst at the brook nor appease my hunger with blackberries that grew abundantly on every side. Thus I mortified the sinful flesh, killed rebellious nature and subdued my spirit to the Lord until at last I felt myself delivered from all evil, freed from the bondage of an earthly love and prepared to devote my heart and soul and life to no woman but thee, O Blessed Virgin!

The Lord having wrought this miracle, my soul felt as light and free as if wings were lifting me to the skies. I praised the Lord in a loud voice, shouting and rejoicing till the rocks rang with the sound. I cried: 'Hosanna! Hosanna!' I was now prepared to go before the altar and receive the holy oil upon my head. I was no longer myself. Ambrosius, the poor erring monk, was dead; I was an instrument in the right hand of God to execute His holy will. I prayed for the delivery of the soul of the beautiful maiden, and as I prayed, behold! there appeared to me in the splendour and glory of Heaven the Lord Himself, attended by innumerable angels, filling half the sky! A great rapture enthralled my senses; I was dumb with happiness. With a smile of ineffable benignity God spake to me:

'Because that thou hast been faithful to thy trust, and through all the trials that I have sent upon thee hast not faltered, the salvation of the sinless maiden's soul is now indeed given into thy hand.'

'Thou, Lord, knowest,' I replied, 'that I am without

the means to do this work, nor know I how it is to be done.'

The Lord commanded me to rise and walk on, and, turning my face away from the glorious Presence, which filled the heart of the cloven mountain with light, I obeyed, leaving the scene of my purgation and regaining the path that led up the face of the cliff. I began the ascent, walking on and on in the splendour of the sunset, reflected from crimson clouds.

Suddenly I felt impelled to stop and look down, and there at my feet, shining red in the cloudlight, as if stained with blood, lay the sharp knife of Rochus. Now I understood why the Lord had permitted that wicked youth to conquer me, yet had moved him to spare my life. I had been reserved for a more glorious purpose. And so was placed in my hands the means to that sacred end. My God, my God, how mysterious are Thy ways!

35

'You shall leave her to me.' So had spoken the wicked youth while holding me between life and death at the precipice. He permitted me to live, not from Christian mercy, but because he despised my life, a trivial thing to him, not worth taking. He was sure of his prey; it did not matter if I were living or dead.

'You shall leave her to me.' Oh, arrogant fool!

Do you not know that the Lord holds His hand over the flowers of the field and the young birds in the nest? Leave Benedicta to you? – permit you to destroy her body and her soul? Ah, you shall see how the hand of God shall be spread above her to guard and save. There is yet time – that soul is still spotless and undefiled. Forward, then, to fulfil the command of the Most High God!

I knelt upon the spot where God had given into my hand the means of her deliverance. My soul was wholly absorbed in the mission entrusted to me. My heart was in ecstasy, and I saw plainly, as in a vision, the triumphant completion of the act which I had still to do.

I arose, and, concealing the knife in my robe, retraced my steps, going downward toward the Black Lake. The new moon looked like a divine wound in the sky, as if some hand had plunged a dagger into Heaven's holy breast.

Benedicta's door was ajar, and I stood outside a long time, gazing upon the beautiful picture presented to my eyes. A bright fire on the hearth lit up the room. Opposite the fire sat Benedicta, combing her long golden hair. Unlike what it was the last time I had stood before her cabin and gazed upon it, her face was full of happiness and had a glory that I had never imagined in it. A sensuous smile played about her lips while she sang in a low, sweet voice the air of a

love song of the people. Ah me! she was beautiful; she looked like a bride of Heaven. But though her voice was as that of an angel, it angered me, and I called out to her:

'What are you doing, Benedicta, so late in the evening? You sing as if you expected your lover, and arrange your hair as for a dance. It is but three days since I, your brother and only friend, left you, in sorrow and despair. And now you are as happy as a bride.'

She sprang up and manifested great joy at seeing me again, and hastened to kiss my hands. But she had no sooner glanced into my face than she uttered a scream of terror and recoiled from me as if I had been a fiend from Hell!

But I approached her and asked: 'Why do you adorn yourself so late in the night? – why are you so happy? Have the three days been long enough for you to fall? Are you the mistress of Rochus?'

She stood staring at me in horror. She asked: 'Where have you been and why do you come? You look so ill! Sit, sir, I pray you, and rest. You are pale and you shake with cold. I will make you a warm drink and you will feel better.'

She was silenced by my stern gaze. 'I have not come to rest and be nursed by you,' I said. 'I am here because the Lord commands. Tell me why you sang.'

She looked up at me with the innocent expression of a babe, and replied: 'Because I had for the moment

forgotten that you were going away, and I was happy.'

'Happy?'

'Yes – he has been here.'

'Who? Rochus?'

She nodded. 'He was so good,' she said. 'He will ask his father to consent to see me, and perhaps take me to his great house and persuade the Reverend Superior to remove the curse from my life. Would not that be fine? But then,' she added, with a sudden change of voice and manner, lowering her eyes, 'perhaps you would no longer care for me. It is because I am poor and friendless.'

'What! he will persuade his father to befriend you? – to take you to his home? – you, the hangman's daughter? He, this reckless youth, at war with God and God's ministers, will move the Church! Oh, lie, lie, lie! O Benedicta – lost, betrayed Benedicta! By your smiles and by your tears I know that you believe the monstrous promises of this infamous villain.'

'Yes,' she said, inclining her head as if she were making a confession of faith before the altar of the Lord, 'I believe him.'

'Kneel, then,' I cried, 'and praise the Lord for sending one of His chosen to save your soul from temporal and eternal perdition!'

At these words she trembled as in great fear.

'What do you wish me to do?' she exclaimed.

'To pray that your sins may be forgiven.'

A sudden rapturous impulse seized my soul. 'I am a priest,' I cried, 'anointed and ordained by God Himself, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I forgive you your only sin, which is your love. I give you absolution without repentance. I free your soul from the taint of sin because you will atone for it with your blood and life.'

With these words, I seized her and forced her down upon her knees. But she wanted to live; she cried and wailed. She clung to my knees and entreated and implored in the name of God and the Blessed Virgin. Then she sprang to her feet and attempted to run away. I seized her again, but she broke away from my grasp and ran to the open door, crying: 'Rochus! Rochus! help, oh, help!'

Springing after her, I grasped her by the shoulder, turned her half-round and plunged the knife into her breast.

I held her in my arms, pressed her against my heart and felt her warm blood upon my body. She opened her eyes and fixed upon me a look of reproach, as if I had robbed her of a life of happiness. Then her eyes slowly closed, she gave a long, shuddering sigh, her little head turned upon her shoulder, and so she died.

I wrapped the beautiful body in a white sheet, leaving the face uncovered, and laid it upon the floor. But the blood tinged the linen, so I parted her long golden hair, spreading it over the crimson roses upon

her breast. As I had made her a bride of Heaven, I took from the image of the Virgin the wreath of edelweiss and placed it on Benedicta's brow; and now I remembered the edelweiss which she had once brought me to comfort me in my penance.

Then I stirred the fire, which cast upon the shrouded figure and the beautiful face a rich red light, as if God's glory had descended there to enfold her. It was caught and tangled in the golden tresses that lay upon her breast, so that they looked a mass of curling flame.

And so I left her.

36

I DESCENDED the mountain by precipitous paths, but the Lord guided my steps so that I neither stumbled nor fell into the abyss. At the dawning of the day I arrived at the monastery, rang the bell and waited until the gate was opened. The brother porter evidently thought me a fiend, for he raised a howl that aroused the whole monastery. I went straight to the room of the Superior, stood before him in my blood-stained garments, and, telling him for what deed the Lord had chosen me, informed him that I was now an ordained priest. At this they seized me, put me into the tower, and, holding court upon me, condemned me to death as if I were a murderer. Oh, the fools, the poor demented fools!

One person has come to me to-day in my dungeon, who fell upon her knees before me, kissed my hands and adored me as God's chosen instrument – Amula, the brown maiden. She alone has discovered that I have done a great and glorious deed.

I have asked Amula to chase away the vultures from my body, for Benedicta is in Heaven.

I shall soon be with her. Praise be to God! Hosanna! Amen.

. . . . . .

[To this old manuscript are added the following lines in another hand: 'On the fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1680, in this place, Brother Ambrosius was hanged, and on the following day his body was buried under the gallows, close to that of the girl Benedicta, whom he killed. This Benedicta, though called the hangman's daughter, was (as is now known through declarations of the youth Rochus) the bastard child of the Saltmaster by the hangman's wife. It is also veritably attested by the same youth that the maiden cherished a secret and forbidden love for him who slew her in ignorance of her passion. In all else Brother Ambrosius was a faithful servant of the Lord. Pray for him, pray for him!']

FANTASTIC FABLES

★

MORAL PRINCIPLE AND MATERIAL INTEREST

A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.

'Down, you base thing!' thundered the Moral Principle, 'and let me pass over you!'

The Material Interest merely looked in the other's eyes without saying anything.

'Ah,' said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, 'let us draw lots to see which one of us shall retire till the other has crossed.'

The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.

'In order to avoid a conflict,' the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, 'I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me.'

Then the Material Interest found his tongue. 'I don't think you are very good walking,' he said. 'I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water.'

It occurred that way.

THE CRIMSON CANDLE

A Man lying at the point of death called his wife to his bedside and said:

'I am about to leave you forever; give me, therefore,

one last proof of your affection and fidelity. In my desk you will find a crimson candle, which has been blessed by the High Priest and has a peculiar mystical significance. Swear to me that while it is in existence you will not remarry.'

The Woman swore and the Man died. At the funeral the Woman stood at the head of the bier, holding a lighted crimson candle till it was wasted entirely away.

ESCUTCHEON AND ERMINE

A Blotted Escutcheon, rising to a question of privilege, said:

'Mr. Speaker, I wish to hurl back an allegation and explain that the spots upon me are the natural markings of one who is a direct descendant of the sun and a spotted fawn. They come of no accident of character, but inhere in the divine order and constitution of things.'

When the Blotted Escutcheon had resumed his seat a Soiled Ermine rose and said:

'Mr. Speaker, I have heard with profound attention and entire approval the explanation of the honourable member, and wish to offer a few remarks on my own behalf. I, too, have been foully calumniated by our ancient enemy, the Infamous Falsehood, and I wish to point out that I am made of the fur of the *Mustela maculata*, which is dirty from birth.'

THE INGENIOUS PATRIOT

Having obtained an audience of the King an Ingenious Patriot pulled a paper from his pocket, saying:

'May it please your Majesty, I have here a formula for constructing armour plating that no gun can pierce. If these plates are adopted in the Royal Navy our warships will be invulnerable and therefore invincible. Here, also, are reports of your Majesty's Ministers, attesting the value of the invention. I will part with my right in it for a million tumtums.'

After examining the papers, the King put them away and promised him an order on the Lord High Treasurer of the Extortion Department for a million tumtums.

'And here,' said the Ingenious Patriot, pulling another paper from another pocket, 'are the working plans of a gun that I have invented, which will pierce that armour. Your Majesty's royal brother, the Emperor of Bang, is eager to purchase it, but loyalty to your Majesty's throne and person constrains me to offer it first to your Majesty. The price is one million tumtums.'

Having received the promise of another cheque, he thrust his hand into still another pocket, remarking:

'The price of the irresistible gun would have been much greater, your Majesty, but for the fact that its

missiles can be so effectively averted by my peculiar method of treating the armour plates with a new –'

The King signed to the Great Head Factotum to approach.

'Search this man,' he said, 'and report how many pockets he has.'

'Forty-three, Sire,' said the Great Head Factotum, completing the scrutiny.

'May it please your Majesty,' cried the Ingenious Patriot, in terror, 'one of them contains tobacco.'

'Hold him up by the ankles and shake him,' said the King; 'then give him a cheque for forty-two million tumtums and put him to death. Let a decree issue making ingenuity a capital offence.'

OFFICER AND THUG

A Chief of Police who had seen an Officer beating a Thug was very indignant, and said he must not do so any more on pain of dismissal.

'Don't be too hard on me,' said the Officer, smiling; 'I was beating him with a stuffed club.'

'Nevertheless,' persisted the Chief of Police, 'it was a liberty that must have been very disagreeable, though it may not have hurt. Please do not repeat it.'

'But,' said the Officer, still smiling, 'it was a stuffed Thug.'

In attempting to express his gratification the Chief

of Police thrust out his right hand with such violence that his skin was ruptured at the arm-pit and a stream of sawdust poured from the wound. He was a stuffed Chief of Police.

TWO KINGS

The King of Madagao, being engaged in a dispute with the King of Bornegascar, wrote him as follows:

'Before proceeding further in this matter I demand the recall of your Minister from my capital.'

Greatly enraged by this impossible demand, the King of Bornegascar replied:

'I shall not recall my Minister. Moreover, if you do not immediately retract your demand I shall withdraw him!'

This threat so terrified the King of Madagao that in hastening to comply he fell over his own feet, breaking the Third Commandment.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OFFICIAL

While a Division Superintendent of a railway was attending closely to his business of placing obstructions on the track and tampering with the switches he received word that the President of the road was about to discharge him for incompetency.

'Good Heavens!' he cried; 'there are more accidents on my division than on all the rest of the line.'

'The President is very particular,' said the Man who brought him the news; 'he thinks the same loss of life might be effected with less damage to the company's property."

'Does he expect me to shoot passengers through the car windows?' exclaimed the indignant official, spiking a loose tie across the rails. 'Does he take me for an assassin?'

THE MORAL SENTIMENT

A Pugilist met the Moral Sentiment of the Community, who was carrying a hat-box. 'What have you in the hat-box, my friend?' inquired the Pugilist.

'A new frown,' was the answer. 'I am bringing it from the frownery – the one over there with the gilded steeple.'

'And what are you going to do with the nice new frown?' the Pugilist asked.

'Put down pugilism – if I have to wear it night and day,' said the Moral Sentiment of the Community sternly.

'That's right,' said the Pugilist, 'that is right, my good friend; if pugilism had been put down yesterday, I wouldn't have this kind of nose to-day. I had a rattling hot fight last evening with – '

'Is that so?' cried the Moral Sentiment of the Com-

munity, with sudden animation. 'Which licked? Sit down here on the hat-box and tell me all about it!'

HOW LEISURE CAME

A Man to Whom Time Was Money, and who was bolting his breakfast in order to catch a train, had leaned his newspaper against the sugar-bowl and was reading as he ate. In his haste and abstraction he stuck a pickle-fork into his right eye, and on removing the fork the eye came with it. In buying spectacles the needless outlay for the right lens soon reduced him to poverty, and the Man to Whom Time Was Money had to sustain life by fishing from the end of a wharf.

THE POLITICIANS

An Old Politician and a Young Politician were travelling through a beautiful country, by the dusty highway which leads to the City of Prosperous Obscurity. Lured by the flowers and the shade and charmed by the songs of birds which invited to woodland paths and green fields, his imagination fired by glimpses of golden domes and glittering palaces in the distance on either hand, the Young Politician said:

'Let us, I beseech thee, turn aside from this comfortless road, leading, thou knowest whither, but not I. Let us turn our backs upon duty and abandon ourselves

to the delights and advantages beckoning from every grove and calling to us from every shining hill. Let us, if so thou wilt, follow this beautiful path, which, as thou seest, hath a guide-board saying, "Turn in here all ye who seek the Palace of Popular Attention." '

'It is a beautiful path, my son,' said the Old Politician, without either slackening his pace or turning his head, 'and it leadeth among pleasant scenes. But the search for the Palace of Popular Attention is beset with one mighty peril.'

'What is that?' said the Young Politician.

'The peril of finding it,' the Old Politician replied, pushing on.

THE CHRISTIAN SERPENT

A Rattlesnake came home to his brood and said: 'My children, gather about and receive your father's last blessing, and see how a Christian dies.'

'What ails you, Father?' asked the Small Snakes.

'I have been bitten by the editor of a partisan journal,' was the reply, accompanied by the ominous death-rattle.

THE THOUGHTFUL WARDEN

The Warden of a Penitentiary was one day putting locks on the doors of all the cells when a mechanic said to him:

'Those locks can all be opened from the inside – you are very imprudent.'

The Warden did not look up from his work, but said:

'If that is called imprudence, I wonder what would be called a thoughtful provision against the vicissitudes of fortune.'

TREASURY AND ARMS

A Public Treasury, feeling Two Arms lifting out its contents, exclaimed:

'Mr. Shareman, I move for a division.'

'You seem to know something about parliamentary forms of speech,' said the Two Arms.

'Yes,' replied the Public Treasury, 'I am familiar with the hauls of legislation.'

THE BROOM OF THE TEMPLE

The city of Gakwak being about to lose its character of capital of the province of Ukwuk, the Wampog issued a proclamation convening all the male residents in council in the Temple of Ul to devise means of defence. The first speaker thought the best policy would be to offer a fried jackass to the gods. The second suggested a public procession headed by the Wampog himself, bearing the Holy Poker on a cushion of cloth

of-brass. Another thought that a scarlet mole should be buried alive in the public park and a suitable incantation chanted over the remains. The advice of the fourth was that the columns of the capitol be rubbed with oil of dog by a person having a moustache on the calf of his leg. When all the others had spoken an Aged Man rose and said:

'High and mighty Wampog and fellow-citizens, I have listened attentively to all the plans proposed. All seem wise, and I do not suffer myself to doubt that any of them would be efficacious. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that if we would put an improved breed of polliwogs in our drinking water, drain our roadways, groom the street cows, offer the stranger within our gates a free choice between the poinard and the potion and relinquish our private system of morals, the other measures of public safety would be needless.'

The Aged Man was about to speak further, but the meeting informally adjourned in order to sweep the floor of the temple – for the men of Gakwak are the tidiest housewives in all that province. The Aged Man was the broom.

THE CRITICS

While bathing, Antinoüs was seen by Minerva, who was so enamoured of his beauty that, all armed as she happened to be, she descended from Olympus to woo

him; but unluckily displaying her shield with the head of Medusa on it, she had the unhappiness to see the beautiful mortal turned to stone from catching a glimpse of it. She straightway ascended to ask Jove to restore him; but before this could be done a Sculptor and a Critic passed that way and espied him.

'This is a very bad Apollo,' said the Sculptor: 'the chest is too narrow, and one arm is at least a half-inch shorter than the other. The attitude is unnatural, and I may say impossible. Ah! my friend, you should see my statue of Antinoüs.'

'In my judgment,' said the Critic, 'the figure is tolerably good, though rather Etrurian, but the expression of the face is decidedly Tuscan, and therefore false to nature. By the way, have you read my work on "The Fallaciousness of the Aspectual in Art"?'

A CALL TO QUIT

Seeing that his audiences were becoming smaller every Sunday, a Minister of the Gospel broke off in the midst of a sermon, descended the pulpit stairs and walked on his hands down the central aisle of the church. He then remounted his feet, ascended to the pulpit and resumed his discourse, making no allusion to the incident.

'Now,' said he to himself, as he went home, 'I shall have, henceforth, a large attendance and no snoring.'

But on the following Friday he was waited upon by the Pillars of the Church, who informed him that in order to be in harmony with the New Theology and get full advantage of modern methods of Gospel interpretation they had deemed it advisable to make a change. They had therefore sent a call to Brother Jowjeetum-Fallal, the world-renowned Hindoo human pin-wheel, then holding forth in Hoopitup's circus. They were happy to say that the reverend gentleman had been moved by the Spirit to accept the call, and on the ensuing Sabbath would break the bread of life for the brethren or break his neck in the attempt.

THE DISCONTENTED MALEFACTOR

A Judge having sentenced a Malefactor to the penitentiary was proceeding to point out to him the disadvantages of crime and the profit of reformation.

'Your honour,' said the Malefactor, interrupting, 'would be you kind enough to alter my punishment to ten years in the penitentiary and nothing else?'

'Why,' said the Judge, surprised, 'I have given you only three years!'

'Yes, I know,' assented the Malefactor – 'three years imprisonment and the preaching. If you please, I should like to commute the preaching.'

FATHER AND SON

'My boy,' said an aged Father to his fiery and disobedient Son: 'a hot temper is the soil of remorse. Promise me that when next you are angry you will count one hundred before you move or speak.'

No sooner had the Son promised than he received a stinging blow from the paternal walking-stick, and by the time he had counted to seventy-five had the unhappiness to see the old man jump into a waiting cab and whirl away.

THE FOOLISH WOMAN

A Married Woman, whose lover was about to reform by running away, procured a pistol and shot him dead.

'Why did you do that, madam?' inquired a Policeman, sauntering by.

'Because,' replied the Married Woman, 'he was a wicked man, and had purchased a ticket to Chicago.'

'My sister,' said an adjacent Man of God, solemnly, 'you cannot stop the wicked from going to Chicago by killing them.'

MAN AND LIGHTNING

A Man Running for Office was overtaken by Lightning.

'You see,' said the Lightning, as it crept past him inch by inch, 'I can travel considerably faster than you.'

'Yes,' the Man Running for Office replied, 'but think how much longer I keep going!'

THE LASSOED BEAR

A Hunter who had lassoed a Bear was trying to disengage himself from the rope, but the slip-knot about his wrist would not yield, for the Bear was all the time pulling in the slack with his paws. In the midst of his trouble the Hunter saw a Showman passing by and managed to attract his attention.

'What will you give me,' he said, 'for my Bear?'

'It will be some five or ten minutes,' said the Showman, 'before I shall want a bear, and it looks to me as if prices would fall during that time. I think I'll wait and watch the market.'

'The price of this animal,' the Hunter replied, 'is down to bed-rock; you can have him for a cent a pound, spot cash, and I'll throw in the next one that I lasso. But the purchaser must remove the goods from the premises forthwith, to make room for three man-eating tigers, a cat-headed gorilla and an armful of rattlesnakes.'

But the Showman passed on in maiden meditation fancy free, and being joined soon afterward by the Bear,

who was absently picking his teeth, it was inferred that they were not unacquainted.

A PROTAGONIST OF SILVER

Some Financiers were whetting their tongues on their teeth because the Government had 'struck down' silver. They were about to 'inaugurate' a season of sweatshed, when they were addressed by a Member of their honourable and warlike body:

'Comrades of the thunder and companions of death, I can but regard it as singularly fortunate that we who by conviction and sympathy are designated by nature as the champions of that fairest of her products, the white metal, should also, by a happy chance, be engaged mostly in the business of mining it. Nothing could be more just than that those who from unselfish motives and elevated sentiments are doing battle for the people's rights and interests should themselves be the chief beneficiaries of success. Therefore, O children of the earthquake and the storm, let us stand shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart and pocket to pocket!'

This speech so pleased the other Members of the convention that actuated by a magnanimous impulse they sprang to their feet and left the hall. It was the first time they had ever been known to leave anything having value.

THE WOODEN GUNS

An Artillery Regiment of a State Militia applied to the Governor for wooden guns to practise with.

'Those,' they explained, 'will be cheaper than real ones.'

'It shall not be said that I sacrificed efficiency to economy,' said the Governor. 'You shall have real guns.'

'Thank you, thank you,' cried the warriors, effusively. 'We will take good care of them, and in the event of war return them to the arsenal.'

THE HOLY DEACON

An Itinerant Preacher who had wrought hard in the moral vineyard for several hours whispered to a Holy Deacon of the local church:

'Brother, these people know you, and your active support will bear fruit abundantly. Please pass the plate for me, and you shall have one fourth.'

The Holy Deacon did so, and putting the money into his pocket waited till the congregation was dismissed, then said good-night.

'But the money, brother, the money that you collected!' said the Itinerant Preacher.

'Nothing is coming to you,' was the reply; 'the

Adversary has hardened their hearts and one fourth is all they gave.'

THE INEFFECTIVE ROOTER

A Drunken Man was lying in the road with a bleeding nose, upon which he had fallen, when a Pig passed that way.

'You wallow fairly well,' said the Pig, 'but, my fine fellow, you have much to learn about rooting.'

A HASTY SETTLEMENT

'Your Honour,' said an Attorney, rising, 'what is the present status of this case – as far as it has gone?'

'I have given a judgment for the residuary legatee under the will,' said the Court, 'put the costs upon the contestants, decided all questions relating to fees and other charges; and, in short, the estate in litigation has been settled, with all controversies, disputes, misunderstandings and differences of opinion thereunto appertaining.'

'Ah, yes, I see,' said the Attorney, thoughtfully, 'we are making progress – we are getting on famously.'

'Progress?' echoed the Judge – 'progress? Why, sir, the matter is concluded!'

'Exactly, exactly; it had to be concluded in order to give relevancy to the motion that I am about to make.

Your Honour, I move that the judgment of the Court be set aside and the case reopened.'

'Upon what ground, sir?' the Judge asked in surprise.

'Upon the ground,' said the Attorney, 'that after paying all fees and expenses of litigation and all charges against the estate there will still be something left.'

'There may have been an error,' said his Honour thoughtfully – 'the Court may have underestimated the value of the estate. The motion is taken under advisement.'

THE POET'S DOOM

An Object was walking along the King's highway wrapped in meditation and with little else on, when he suddenly found himself at the gates of a strange city. On applying for admittance, he was arrested as a necessitator of ordinances and taken before the King.

'Who are you,' said the King, 'and what is your business in life?'

'Snouter the Sneak,' replied the Object, with ready invention – 'pick-pocket.'

The King was about to command him to be released when the Prime Minister suggested that the prisoner's fingers be examined. They were found greatly flattened and calloused at the ends.

'Ha!' cried the King; 'I told you so! – he is addicted

to counting syllables. He is a poet. Turn him over to the Lord High Dissuader from the Head Habit.'

'My liege,' said the Inventor-in-Ordinary of Ingenious Penalties, 'I venture to suggest a keener affliction.'

'Name it,' the King said.

'Let him retain that head!'

It was so ordered.

NOSER AND NOTE

The Head Rifler of an insolvent bank, learning that it was about to be visited by the official Noser into Things, placed his own personal note for a large amount among its resources, and gaily touching his guitar awaited the inspection. When the Noser came to the note he asked, 'What's this?'

'That,' said the Assitant Pocketer of Deposits, 'is one of our liabilities.'

'A liability?' exclaimed the Noser. 'Nay, nay, an asset. That is what you mean, doubtless.'

'Therein you err,' the Pocketer explained; 'that note was written in the bank with our own pen, ink and paper, and we have not paid a stationery bill for six months.'

'Ah, I see,' the Noser said, thoughtfully; 'it is a liability. May I ask how you expect to meet it?'

'With fortitude, please God,' answered the Assistant Pocketer, his eyes to Heaven raising – 'with fortitude and a firm reliance on the laxity of the law.'

'Enough, enough,' exclaimed the faithful servant of the State, choking with emotion; 'here is a certificate of solvency.'

'And here is a bottle of ink,' the grateful financier said, slipping it into the other's pocket; 'it is all that we have.'

LION AND RATTLESNAKE

A Man having found a Lion in his path undertook to subdue him by the power of the human eye; and near by was a Rattlesnake engaged in fascinating a small bird.

'How are you getting on, brother?' the Man called out to the other reptile, without removing his eyes from those of the Lion.

'Admirably,' replied the serpent. 'My success is assured; my victim draws nearer and nearer in spite of her efforts.'

'And mine,' said the Man, 'draws nearer and nearer in spite of mine. Are you sure it is all right?'

'If you don't think so,' the reptile replied as well as he then could, with his mouth full of bird, 'you'd better give it up.'

A half-hour later the Lion, thoughtfully picking his

teeth with his claws, told the Rattlesnake that he had never in all his varied experience in being subdued, seen a subduer try so earnestly to give it up. 'But,' he added, with a wide, significant smile, 'I looked him into countenance.'

THE LITERARY ASTRONOMER

The Director of an Observatory, who, with a thirty-six inch refractor, had discovered the moon, hastened to an Editor, with a four-column account of the event.

'How much?' said the Editor, sententiously, without looking up from his essay on the circularity of the political horizon.

'One hundred and sixty dollars,' replied the man who had discovered the moon.

'Not half enough,' was the Editor's comment.

'Generous man!' cried the Astronomer, glowing with warm and elevated sentiments, 'pay me, then, what you will.'

'Great and good friend,' said the Editor, blandly, looking up from his work, 'we are far asunder, it seems. The paying is to be done by you.'

The Director of the Observatory gathered up the manuscript and went away, explaining that it needed correction – that he had neglected to dot man.

THE REFORM SCHOOL BOARD

The members of the School Board in Doosnoswair being suspected of appointing female teachers for an improper consideration, the people elected a Board composed wholly of women. In a few years the scandal was at an end; there were no female teachers in the Department.

ALDERMAN AND RACCOON

'I see quite a number of rings on your tail,' said an Alderman to a Raccoon that he met in a zoological garden.

'Yes,' replied the Racoon, 'and I hear quite a number of tales on your ring.'

The Alderman, being of a sensitive, retiring disposition, shrank from further comparison, and strolling to another part of the garden stole the camel.

CAT AND KING

A Cat was looking at a King, as permitted by the proverb.

'Well,' said the monarch, observing her inspection of the royal person, 'how do you like me?'

'I can imagine a King,' said the Cat, 'whom I should like better.'

'For example?'

'The King of Mice.'

The sovereign was so pleased with the wit of the reply that he gave her permission to scratch his Prime Minister's eyes out.

THE MAN WITH NO ENEMIES

An Inoffensive Person walking in a public place was assaulted by a Stranger with a Club, and severely beaten.

When the Stranger with a Club was brought to trial, the complainant said to the Judge:

'I do not know why I was assaulted; I have not an enemy in the world.'

'That,' said the defendant, 'is why I struck him.'

'Let the prisoner be discharged,' said the Judge; 'a man who has no enemies has no friends. The courts are not for such.'

THE FLYING MACHINE

An Ingenious Man who had built a flying-machine invited a great concourse of people to see it go up. At the appointed moment, everything being ready, he boarded the car and turned on the power. The machine immediately broke through the massive substructure

upon which it was builded, and sank out of sight into the earth, the aeronaut springing out barely in time to save himself.

'Well,' said he, 'I have done enough to demonstrate the correctness of my details. The defects,' he added, with a look at the ruined brick-work, 'are merely basic and fundamental.'

On this assurance the people came forward with subscriptions to build a second machine.

THE ANGEL'S TEAR

An Unworthy Man who had laughed at the woes of a Woman whom he loved, was bewailing his indiscretion in sack-cloth-of-gold and ashes-of-roses, when the Angel of Compassion looked down upon him, saying:

'Poor mortal! – how unblest not to know the wickedness of laughing at another's misfortune!'

So saying, he let fall a great tear, which, encountering in its descent a current of cold air, was congealed into a hail-stone. This struck the Unworthy Man upon the head and set him rubbing that bruised organ vigorously with one hand while vainly attempting to expand an umbrella with the other.

Thereat the Angel of Compassion did most shamelessly and wickedly laugh.

THE CITY OF POLITICAL DISTINCTION

Jamrach the Rich, being anxious to reach the City of Political Distinction before nightfall, arrived at a fork of the road and was undecided which branch to follow; so he consulted a Wise-Looking Person who sat by the wayside.

'Take *that* road,' said the Wise-Looking Person, pointing it out; 'it is known as the Political Highway.'

'Thank you,' said Jamrach, and was about to proceed.

'About how much do you thank me?' was the reply. 'Do you suppose I am here for my health?'

As Jamrach had not become rich by stupidity he handed something to his guide and hastening on soon came to a toll-gate kept by a Benevolent Gentleman, to whom he gave something and was suffered to pass. A little farther along he came to a bridge across an imaginary stream, where a Civil Engineer (who had built the bridge) demanded something for interest on his investment, and it was forthcoming. It was growing late when Jamrach came to the margin of what appeared to be a lake of black ink, and there the road terminated. Seeing a Ferryman in his boat he paid something for his passage and was about to embark.

'No,' said the Ferryman. 'Put your neck in this noose, and I will tow you over. It is the only way,'

he added, seeing that the passenger was about to complain of the accommodations.

In due time he was dragged across, half strangled and dreadfully beslubbered by the feculent waters. 'There,' said the Ferryman, hauling him ashore and disengaging him, 'you are now in the City of Political Distinction. It has fifty millions of inhabitants, and as the colour of the Filthy Pool does not wash off, they all look exactly alike.'

'Alas!' exclaimed Jamrach, weeping and bewailing the loss of all his possessions, paid out in tips and tolls; 'I will go back with you.'

'I don't think you will,' said the Ferryman, pushing off; 'this city is situated on the Island of the Unreturning.'

THE PARTY OVER THERE

A Man in a Hurry, whose watch was at his lawyer's, asked a Grave Person the time of day.

'I heard you ask that Party Over There the same question,' said the Grave Person. 'What answer did he give you?'

'He said it was about three o'clock,' replied the Man in a Hurry; 'but he did not look at his watch, and as the sun is nearly down I think it is later.'

'The fact that the sun is nearly down,' the Grave Person said, 'is immaterial, but the fact that he did not

consult his timepiece and make answer after due deliberation and consideration is fatal. The answer given,' continued the Grave Person, consulting his own timepiece, 'is of no effect, invalid, and void.'

'What, then,' said the Man in a Hurry, eagerly, 'is the time of day?'

'The question is remanded to the Party Over There for a new answer,' replied the Grave Person, returning his watch to his pocket and moving away with great dignity.

He was a Judge of an Appellate Court.

THE POET OF REFORM

One pleasant day in the latter part of eternity, as the Shades of all the great writers were reposing upon beds of asphodel and moly in the Elysian fields, each happy in hearing from the lips of the others nothing but copious quotation from his own works (for so Jove had kindly bedevilled their ears) there came in among them with triumphant mien a Shade whom none knew. She (for the newcomer showed such evidences of sex as cropped hair and a manly stride) took a seat in their midst and smiling a superior smile explained:

'After centuries of oppression I have wrested my rights from the grasp of the jealous gods. On earth I was the Poetess of Reform and sang to inattentive ears. Now for an eternity of honour and glory.'

But it was not to be so, and soon she was the unhappiest of immortals, vainly desirous to wander again in gloom by the infernal lakes. For Jove had not bedevilled her ears, and she heard from the lips of each blessed Shade an incessant flow of quotation from his own works. Moreover, she was denied the happiness of repeating her poems. She could not recall a line of them, for Jove had decreed that the memory of them abide in Pluto's painful domain as a part of the apparatus.

THE UNCHANGED DIPLOMATIST

The republic of Madagonia had been long and well represented at the court of the King of Patagascar by an officer called a Dazie, but one day the Madagonian Parliament conferred upon him the superior rank of Dandee. The next day after being apprised of his new dignity he hastened to inform the King of Patagascar.

'Ah, yes, I understand,' said the King; 'you have been promoted and given increased pay and allowances. There was an appropriation?'

'Yes, your Majesty.'

'And you have now two heads, have you not?'

'Oh, no, your Majesty – only one, I assure you.'

'Indeed? And how many legs and arms?'

'Two of each, Sire – only two of each.'

'And only one body?'

'Just a single body, as you perceive.'

Thoughtfully removing his crown and scratching the royal head, the monarch was silent a moment, and then he said:

'I fancy that appropriation has been misapplied. You seem to be about the same kind of damned fool that you were before.'

AN INVITATION

A Pious Person who had overcharged his paunch with dead bird by way of attesting his gratitude for escaping the many calamities which Heaven had sent upon others fell asleep at table and dreamed. He thought he lived in a country where turkeys were the ruling class, and every year they held a feast to manifest their sense of Heaven's goodness in sparing their lives, to kill them later. One day, about a week before one of these feasts, he met the Supreme Gobbler, who said:

'You will please get yourself into good condition for the Thanksgiving dinner.'

'Yes, your Excellency,' replied the Pious Person, delighted, 'I shall come hungry, I assure you. It is no small privilege to dine with your Excellency.'

The Supreme Gobbler eyed him for a moment in silence; then he said:

'As one of the lower domestic animals, you cannot be expected to know much, but you might know something. Since you do not, you will permit me to point

out that being asked to dinner is one thing; being asked to dine is another and different thing.'

With this significant remark the Supreme Gobbler left him, and thenceforward the Pious Person dreamed of himself as white meat and dark until rudely awakened by terror.

THE ASHES OF MADAME BLAVATSKY

The brightest two Lights of Theosophy being in the same place at once in company with the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, an Inquiring Soul thought the time propitious to learn something worth while. So he sat at the feet of one awhile, and then he sat awhile at the feet of the other, and at last he applied his ear to the keyhole of the casket containing the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky. When the Inquiring Soul had completed his course of instruction he declared himself the Ahkoond of Swat, fell into the baleful habit of standing on his head and swore that the mother who bore him was a pragmatic paralogism. Wherefore he was held in so high reverence that when the two other gentlemen were hanged for lying the Theosophists elected him to the leadership of their Disastral Body, and after a quiet life and an honourable death by the kick of a jackass he was reincarnated as a Yellow Dog. As such he ate the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, and Theosophy was no more.

THE OPOSSUM OF THE FUTURE

One day an Opossum who had gone to sleep hanging from the highest branch of a tree by the tail, awoke and saw a large Snake wound about the limb, between him and the trunk of the tree.

'If I hold on,' he said to himself, 'I shall be swallowed; if I let go I shall break my neck.'

But suddenly he bethought himself to dissemble.

'My perfected friend,' he said, 'my parental instinct recognises in you a noble evidence and illustration of the theory of development. You are the Opossum of the Future, the ultimate Fittest Survivor of our species, the ripe result of progressive prehensility – all tail!'

But the Snake, proud of his ancient eminence in Scriptural history, was strictly orthodox and did not accept the scientific view.

THE LIFE-SAVER

Seventy-five Men presented themselves before the President of the Humane Society and demanded the great gold medal for life-saving.

'Why, yes,' said the President; 'by diligent effort so many men must have saved a considerable number of lives. How many did you save?'

'Seventy-five, sir,' replied their Spokesman.

'Ah, yes, that is one each – very good work – very good work, indeed,' the President said. 'You shall not only have the Society's great gold medal, but its recommendation for employment at the several life-boat stations along the coast. But how did you save so many lives?'

The Spokesman of the Men replied:

'We are officers of the law, and have just abandoned the pursuit of two murderous outlaws.'

THE AUSTRALIAN GRASSHOPPER

A Distinguished Naturalist was travelling in Australia, when he saw a Kangaroo in session and flung a stone at it. The Kangaroo immediately adjourned, tracing against the sunset sky a parabolic curve spanning seven provinces, and evanished below the horizon. The Distinguished Naturalist looked interested, but said nothing for an hour; then he said to his native Guide:

'You have pretty wide meadows here, I suppose?'

'No, not very wide,' the Guide answered; 'about the same as in England and America.'

After another long silence the Distinguished Naturalist said:

'The hay which we shall purchase for our horses this evening – I shall expect to find the stalks about fifty feet long. Am I right?'

'Why, no,' said the Guide; 'a foot or two is about the usual length of our hay. What can you be thinking of?'

The Distinguished Naturalist made no immediate reply, but later, as in the shades of night they journeyed through the desolate vastness of the Great Lone Land, he broke the silence:

'I was thinking,' he said, 'of the uncommon magnitude of that grasshopper.'

THE PAVIOR

An Author saw a Labourer hammering stones into the pavement of a street, and approaching him said:

'My friend, you seem weary. Ambition is a hard taskmaster.'

'I'm working for Mr. Jones, sir,' the Labourer replied.

'Well, cheer up,' the Author resumed; 'fame comes at the most unexpected times. To-day you are poor, obscure and disheartened, but to-morrow the world may be ringing with your name.'

'What are you telling me?' the Labourer said. 'Can not an honest pavior perform his work in peace, and get his money for it, and his living by it, without others talking rot about ambition and hopes of fame?'

'Can not an honest writer?' said the Author.

THE TRIED ASSASSIN

An Assassin being put upon trial in a New England court, his Counsel rose and said: 'Your Honour, I move for a discharge on the ground of "once in jeopardy": my client has been already tried for that murder and acquitted.'

'In what court?' asked the Judge.

'In the Superior Court of San Francisco,' the Counsel replied.

'Let the trial proceed – your motion is denied,' said the Judge. 'An Assassin is not in jeopardy when tried in California.'

TWO POETS

Two Poets were quarrelling for the Apple of Discord and the Bone of Contention, for they were very hungry.

'My sons,' said Apollo, 'I will part the prizes between you. You,' he said to the First Poet, 'excel in Art – take the Apple. And you,' he said to the Second Poet, 'in imagination – take the Bone.'

'To Art the best prize!' said the First Poet, triumphantly, and endeavouring to devour his award broke all his teeth. The Apple was a work of Art.

'That shows our master's contempt for mere Art,' said the Second Poet, grinning.

Thereupon he attempted to gnaw his Bone, but his teeth passed through it without encountering resistance. It was an imaginary Bone.

THE WITCH'S STEED

A Broomstick that had long served a witch as a steed complained of the nature of its employment, which it thought degrading.

'Very well,' said the Witch, 'I will give you work in which you will be associated with intellect – you will come in contact with brains. I shall present you to a housewife.'

'What!' said the Broomstick, 'do you consider the hands of a housewife intellectual?'

'I referred,' said the Witch, 'to the head of her good man.'

THE SAGACIOUS RAT

A Rat that was about to emerge from his hole caught a glimpse of a Cat waiting for him, and descending to the colony at the bottom of the hole invited a Friend to join him in a visit to a neighbouring corn-bin. 'I would have gone alone,' he said, 'but could not deny myself the pleasure of such distinguished company.'

'Very well,' said the Friend, 'I will go with you. Lead on.'

'Lead?' exclaimed the other. 'What! I precede so great and illustrious a rat as you? No, indeed – after you, sir, after you.'

Pleased with this great show of deference, the Friend swent ahead, and, leaving the hole first, was caught by the Cat, who trotted away with him. The other then went out unmolested.

THE BUMBO OF JIAM

The Pahdour of Patagascar and the Gookul of Madagonia were disputing about an island that both claimed. Finally, at the suggestion of the International League of Cannon Founders, which had important branches in both countries, they decided to refer their claims to the Bumbo of Jiam, and abide by his judgment. In settling the preliminaries of the arbitration they had, however, the misfortune to disagree, and appealed to arms. At the end of a long and disastrous war, when both sides were exhausted and bankrupt, the Bumbo of Jiam intervened in the interest of peace.

'My great and good friends,' he said to his brother sovereigns, 'it will be advantageous to you to learn that some questions are more complex and perilous than others, presenting a greater number of points upon which it is possible to differ. For four generations your royal predecessors disputed about possession of that island without falling out. Beware, oh, beware the

perils of international arbitration! – against which I feel it my duty to protect you henceforth.'

So saying, he annexed both countries, and after a long, peaceful and happy reign was poisoned by his Prime Minister.

LEGISLATOR AND SOAP

A member of the Kansas Legislature meeting a Cake of Soap was passing it by without recognition, but the Cake of Soap insisted on stopping and shaking hands. Thinking it might possibly be in the enjoyment of the elective franchise, he gave it a cordial and earnest grasp. On letting it go he observed that a part of it adhered to his fingers, and running to a brook in great alarm, proceeded to wash it off. In doing so he necessarily got some on the other hand, and when he had finished washing both were so white that he went to bed and sent for a physician.

THE SHADOW OF THE LEADER

A Political Leader was walking out one sunny day when he observed his Shadow leaving him and walking rapidly away.

'Come back here, you scoundrel,' he cried.

'If I had been a scoundrel,' answered the Shadow, increasing its speed, 'I should not have left you.'

THE ALL-DOG

A Lion seeing a Poodle, fell into laughter at the ridiculous spectacle.

'Who ever saw so small a beast?' he said.

'It is very true,' said the Poodle, with austere dignity, 'that I am small; but, sir, I beg you to observe that I am all dog.'

A CAUSEWAY

A Rich Woman having returned from abroad disembarked at the foot of Kneedeep Street, and was about to walk to her hotel through the mud.

'Madam,' said a Policeman, 'I cannot permit you to do that; you would soil your shoes and stockings.'

'Oh, that is of no importance, really,' replied the Rich Woman, with a cheerful smile.

'But, madam, it is needless; from the wharf to the hotel, as you observe, extends an unbroken line of prostrate newspaper men who crave the honour of having you walk upon them.'

'In that case,' she said, seating herself in a doorway and unlocking her satchel, 'I shall have to put on my rubber boots.'

THE THISTLES UPON THE GRAVE

A Mind Reader made a wager that he would be

buried alive and remain so for six months, then be dug up alive. In order to secure the grave against secret disturbance, it was sown with thistles. At the end of three months the Mind Reader lost his bet. He had come up to eat the thistles.

ALARM AND PRIDE

'Good-morning, my friend,' said Alarm to Pride; 'how are you this morning?'

'Very tired,' answered Pride, seating himself on a stone by the wayside and mopping his steaming brow. 'The politicians are wearing me out by pointing to their dirty records with *me*, when they could as well use a stick.'

Alarm sighed sympathetically and said:

'It is pretty much the same way here. Instead of using an opera-glass they view the acts of their opponents with *me!*'

As these patient drudges were mingling their tears, they were notified that they must go on duty again, for one of the political parties had nominated a thief and was about to hold a gratification meeting.

THE FARMER'S FRIEND

A Great Philanthropist who had thought of himself in connection with the Presidency and had introduced a

bill into Congress requiring the Government to lend every voter all the money that he needed, on his personal security, was explaining to a Sunday-School at a railway station how much he had done for the country, when an angel looked down from Heaven and wept.

'For example,' said the Great Philanthropist, watching the teardrops pattering in the dust, 'these early rains are of incalculable advantage to the farmer.'

PHYSICIANS TWO

A Wicked Old Man finding himself ill sent for a Physician, who prescribed for him and went away. Then the Wicked Old Man sent for Another Physician, saying nothing of the first, and an entirely different treatment was ordered. This continued for some weeks, the physicians visiting him on alternate days and treating him for two different disorders, with constantly enlarging doses of medicine and more and more rigorous nursing. But one day they accidentally met at his bedside while he slept and, the truth coming out, a violent quarrel ensued.

'My good friends,' said the patient, awakened by the noise of the dispute, and apprehending the cause of it, 'pray be more reasonable. If I could for weeks endure you both, can you not for a little while endure each other? I have been well for ten days, but have remained in bed in the hope of gaining by repose the strength

that would justify me in taking your medicines. So far I have touched none of them.'

THE HONEST CADI

A Robber who had plundered a merchant of one thousand pieces of gold was taken before the Cadi, who asked him if he had anything to say why he should not be decapitated.

'Your Honour,' said the Robber, 'I could do no otherwise than take the money, for Allah made me that way.'

'Your defence is ingenious and sound,' said the Cadi, 'and I must acquit you of criminality. Unfortunately, Allah has also made me so that I must take off your head – unless,' he added thoughtfully, 'you offer me a half of the gold; for He made me weak under temptation.'

Thereupon the Robber put five hundred pieces of gold into the Cadi's hand.

'Good,' said the Cadi. 'I shall now remove only one-half your head. To show my trust in your discretion I shall leave intact the half that you talk with.'

THE OVERLOOKED FACTOR

A Man that owned a fine Dog, and by a careful selection of its mate had bred a number of animals but

a little lower than the angels, fell in love with his washerwoman, married her, and reared a family of dolts.

'Alas!' he exclaimed, contemplating the melancholy result, 'had I but chosen a mate for myself with half the care that I did for my Dog, I should now be a proud and happy father.'

'I'm not so sure of that,' said the Dog, overhearing the lament. 'There's a difference, certainly, between your whelps and mine, but I flatter myself that it is not due altogether to the mothers. You and I are not entirely alike ourselves.'

A RADICAL PARALLEL

Some White Christians engaged in driving Chinese Heathens out of an American town found a newspaper published in Peking in the Chinese tongue and compelled one of their victims to translate an editorial. It turned out to be an appeal to the people of the province of Pang Ki to drive the foreign devils out of the country and burn their dwellings and churches. At this evidence of Mongolian barbarity the White Christians were so greatly incensed that they carried out their original design.

KANGAROO AND ZEBRA

A Kangaroo hopping awkwardly along with some

bulky object concealed in her pouch, met a Zebra, and desirous of keeping his attention upon himself, said:

'Your costume looks as if you might have come out of the penitentiary.'

'Appearances are deceitful,' replied the Zebra, smiling in the consciousness of a more insupportable wit, 'or I should have to think that you had come out of the Legislature.'

A MATTER OF METHOD

A Philosopher seeing a Fool beating his Donkey, said:

'Abstain, my son, abstain, I implore. Those who resort to violence shall suffer from violence.'

'That,' said the Fool, diligently belabouring the animal, 'is what I'm trying to teach this beast – which has kicked me.'

'Doubtless,' said the Philosopher to himself, as he walked away, 'the wisdom of fools is no deeper nor truer than ours, but they really do seem to have a more impressive way of imparting it.'

A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

During a shower of rain the Keeper of a Zoological garden observed a Man of Principle crouching beneath the belly of the ostrich, which had drawn itself up to its full height to sleep.

'Why, my dear sir,' said the Keeper, 'if you fear to get wet you'd better creep into the pouch of yonder female kangaroo – the *Saltatrix mackintosha* – for if that ostrich wakes he will kick you to death in a moment!'

'I can't help that,' the Man of Principle replied, with that lofty scorn of practical considerations distinguishing his species. 'He may kick me to death if he wish, but until he does he shall give me shelter from the storm. He has swallowed my umbrella.'

THE RETURNED CALIFORNIAN

A Man was hanged by the neck until he was dead. This was in 1893.

'Whence do you come?' Saint Peter asked when the Man presented himself at the gate of Heaven.

'From California,' replied the applicant.

'Enter, my son, enter; you bring joyous tidings.'

When the Man had vanished inside, Saint Peter took his memorandum tablet and made the following entry:

'February 16, 1893. California settled by the Christians.'

THE COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN

A Kind-Hearted Physician sitting at the bedside of a patient afflicted with an incurable and painful disease,

heard a noise behind him, and, turning, saw a Cat laughing at the feeble efforts of a wounded Mouse to drag itself out of the room.

'You cruel beast!' he cried. 'Why don't you kill it at once, like a lady?'

Rising, he kicked the Cat out of the door, and, picking up the Mouse compassionately, put it out of its misery by pulling off its head. Recalled to the bedside by the moans of his patient, the Kind-hearted Physician administered a stimulant, a tonic and a nutrient, and went away.

A PROPHET OF EVIL

An Undertaker Who Was a Member of a Trust saw a Man Leaning on a Spade, and asked why he was not at work.

'Because,' said the Man Leaning on a Spade, 'I belong to the Gravediggers' National Extortion Society, and we have decided to limit the production of graves and get more money for the reduced output. We have a corner in graves and purpose working it to the best advantage.'

'My friend,' said the Undertaker Who Was a Member of the Trust, 'this is a most hateful and injurious scheme. If people cannot be assured of graves I fear they will no longer die, and the best interests of civilisation will wither like a frosted leaf.'

And blowing his eyes upon his handkerchief, he walked away lamenting.

TWO OF THE DAMNED

Two Blighted Beings, haggard, lachrymose and detested, met on a blasted heath in the light of a struggling moon.

'I wish you a merry Christmas,' said the First Blighted Being, in a voice like that of a singing tomb.

'And I you a happy New Year,' responded the Second Blighted Being, with the accent of a penitent accordeon.

They then fell upon each other's neck and wept scalding rills down each other's spine in token of their banishment to the Realm of Ineffable Bosh. For one of these accursed creatures was the First of January, and the other the Twenty-Fifth of December.

THE AUSTERE GOVERNOR

A Governor visiting a State prison was implored by a Convict to pardon him.

'What are you in for?' asked the Governor.

'I held a high office,' the Convict humbly replied, 'and sold subordinate appointments.'

'Then I decline to interfere,' said the Governor, with asperity; 'a man who abuses his office by making it

serve a private end and purvey a personal advantage is unfit to be free. By the way, Mr. Warden,' he added to that official, as the Convict slunk away, 'in appointing you to this position, I was given to understand that your friends could make the Shikane county delegation to the next State convention solid for – for the present Administration. Was I rightly informed?'

'You were, sir.'

'Very well, then, I will bid you good-day. Please be so good as to appoint my nephew Night Chaplain and Reminder of Mothers and Sisters.'

THE PENITENT ELECTOR

A Person belonging to the Society for Passing Resolutions of Respect for the Memory of Deceased Members having died, received the customary attention.

'Good heavens!' exclaimed a Sovereign Elector, on hearing the resolutions read, 'what a loss to the nation! And to think that I once voted against that angel for Inspector of Gate-latches in Public Squares!'

In remorse the Sovereign Elector deprived himself of political influence by learning to read.

RELIGIONS OF ERROR

Hearing a sound of strife, a Christian in the Orient asked his Dragoman the cause of it.

'The Buddhists are cutting Mohammedan throats.' the Dragoman replied, with Oriental composure.

'I did not know,' remarked the Christian, with scientific interest, 'that that would make so much noise.'

'The Mohammedans are cutting Buddhist throats,' added the Dragoman.

'It is astonishing,' mused the Christian, 'how violent and how general are religious animosities.'

So saying he visibly smugged and went off to telegraph for a brigade of cut-throats to protect Christian interests.

THE TAIL OF THE SPHINX

A Dog of a taciturn disposition said to his Tail:

'Whenever I am angry you rise and bristle; when I am pleased you wag; when I am alarmed you tuck yourself in out of danger. You are too mercurial – you disclose all my emotions. My notion is that tails are given to conceal thought. It is my dearest ambition to be as impassive as the Sphinx.'

'My friend, you must recognise the laws and limitations of your being,' replied the Tail, with flexions appropriate to the sentiments uttered, 'and try to be great some other way. The Sphinx has one hundred and fifty qualifications for impassiveness which you lack.'

'What are they?' the Dog asked.

'One hundred and forty-nine tons of sand on its tail.'

'And – ?'

'A stone tail.'

THE CREW OF THE LIFEBOAT

The Gallant Crew at a life-saving station were about to launch their lifeboat for a spin along the coast when they discovered, a little distance away, a capsized vessel with a dozen men clinging to her keel.

'We are fortunate,' said the Gallant Crew, 'to have seen that in time. Our fate might have been the same as theirs.'

So they hauled the lifeboat back into its house and were spared to the service of their country.

A TREATY OF PEACE

Through massacres of each other's citizens China and the United States had been four times plunged into devastating wars, when, in the year 1994, arose a Philosopher in Madagascar, who laid before the Governments of the two distracted countries the following *modus vivendi:*

'Massacres are to be sternly forbidden as heretofore; but any citizen or subject of either country disobeying the injunction is to detach the scalps of all persons massacred and deposit them with a local officer designated to receive and preserve them and sworn to keep

and render a true account thereof. At the conclusion of each massacre in their country, or as soon thereafter as practicable, or at stated regular periods, as may be provided by treaty, there shall be a counting of scalps, without regard to sex or age; the Government having the greatest number is to be taxed on the excess at the rate of $1,000 a scalp, and the other Government credited with the amount. Once in every decade there shall be a general settlement, when the balance due shall be paid to the creditor nation in Mexican dollars.'

The plan was adopted, the necessary treaty made, with legislation to carry out its provisions; the Madagascarene Philosopher took his seat in the Temple of Immortality and Peace spread her white wings over the two nations, to the unspeakable defiling of her plumage.

THE NIGHTSIDE OF CHARACTER

A Gifted and Honourable Editor, who by practice of his profession had acquired wealth and distinction, applied to an Old Friend for the hand of his daughter in marriage.

'With all my heart, and God bless you!' said the Old Friend, grasping him by both hands. 'It is a greater honour than I had dared to hope for.'

'I knew what your answer would be,' replied the Gifted and Honourable Editor. 'And yet,' he added,

with a sly smile, 'I feel that I ought to give you as much knowledge of my character as I possess. In this scrap-book is such testimony relating to my shady side as I have within the past ten years been able to cut from the columns of my competitors in the business of elevating humanity to a higher plane of mind and morals – my "loathsome contemporaries." '

Laying the book on a table, he withdrew in high spirits to make arrangements for the wedding. Three days later he received the scrap-book from a messenger, with a note warning him never again to darken his Old Friend's door.

'See!' the Gifted and Honourable Editor exclaimed, pointing to that injunction – 'I am a painter and grainer!'

And he was led away to the Asylum for the Indiscreet.

THE FAITHFUL CASHIER

The Cashier of a bank having defaulted was asked by the Directors what he had done with the money taken.

'I am greatly surprised by such a question,' said the Cashier; 'it sounds as if you suspected me of selfishness. Gentlemen, I applied that money to the purpose for which I took it; I paid it as an initiation fee and one year's dues in advance to the Treasurer of the Cashiers' Mutual Defence Association.'

'What is the object of that organisation?' the Directors inquired.

'When any one of its members is under suspicion,' replied the Cashier, 'the Association undertakes to clear his character by submitting evidence that he was never a prominent member of any church, nor foremost in Sunday-School work.'

Recognising the value to the bank of a spotless reputation for its officers, the President drew his cheque for the amount of the shortage and the Cashier was restored to favour.

THE CIRCULAR CLUE

A Detective searching for the murderer of a dead man was accosted by a Clue.

'Follow me,' said the Clue, 'and there's no knowing what you may discover.'

So the Detective followed the Clue a whole year through a thousand sinuosities and at last found himself in the office of the Morgue.

'There!' said the Clue, pointing to the open register.

The Detective eagerly scanned the page and found an official statement that the deceased was dead. Thereupon he hastened to Police Headquarters to report progress. The Clue, meanwhile, sauntered among the busy haunts of men, arm in arm with an Ingenious Theory.

THE DEVOTED WIDOW

A Widow weeping on her husband's grave was approached by an Engaging Gentleman who, in a respectful manner, assured her that he had long entertained for her the most tender feelings.

'Wretch!' cried the Widow. 'Leave me this instant! Is this a time to talk to me of love?'

'I assure you, madam, that I had not intended to disclose my affection,' the Engaging Gentleman humbly explained, 'but the power of your beauty has overcome my discretion.'

'You should see me when I have not been weeping,' said the Widow.

THE HARDY PATRIOTS

A Dispenser-Elect of Patronage gave notice through the newspapers that applicants for places would be given none until a certain date.

'You are disposing yourself to a grave danger,' said a Lawyer.

'How so?' the Dispenser-Elect inquired.

'It will be nearly two months,' the Lawyer answered, 'before the day that you mention. Few Patriots can live so long without eating, and some of the applicants will be compelled to go to work in the meantime. If that kills them, you will be liable to prosecution for murder.'

'You underrate their powers of endurance,' the official replied.

'What!' said the Lawyer, 'you think they can endure work?'

'No,' said the other – 'hunger.'

THE HUMBLE PEASANT

An Office Seeker whom the President had ordered out of Washington was watering the homeward highway with his tears.

'Ah,' he said, 'how disastrous is ambition! how unsatisfying its rewards! how terrible its disappointments! Behold yonder peasant tilling his field in peace and contentment! He rises with the lark, passes the day in wholesome toil and lies down at night to pleasant dreams. In the mad struggle for place and power he has no part; the roar of the strife reaches his ear like the distant murmur of the ocean. Happy, thrice happy man! I will approach him and bask in the sunshine of his humble felicity. Peasant, hail!'

Leaning upon his rake, the Peasant returned the salutation with a nod, but said nothing.

'My friend,' said the Office Seeker, 'you see before you the wreck of an ambitious man – ruined by the pursuit of place and power. This morning when I set out from the national capital – '

'Stranger,' the Peasant interrupted, 'if you're going

back there soon maybe you wouldn't mind using your influence to make me Postmaster at Smith's Corners.'

The traveller passed on.

THE VARIOUS DELEGATION

The King of Wideout having been offered the sovereignty of Awayoff, sent for the Three Persons who had made the offer, and said to them:

'I am extremely obliged to you, but before accepting so great a responsibility I must ascertain the sentiments of the people of Awayoff.'

'Sire,' said the Spokesman of the Three Persons, 'they stand before you.'

'Indeed!' said the King, 'are you, then, the people of Awayoff?'

'Yes, your Majesty.'

'There are not many of you,' the King said, attentively regarding them with the royal eye, 'and you are not so very large; I hardly think you are a quorum. Moreover, I never heard of you until you came here; whereas Awayoff is noted for the quality of its pork and contains hogs of distinction. I shall send a Commissioner to ascertain the sentiments of the hogs.'

The Three Persons, bowing profoundly, backed out of the presence; but soon afterward they desired another audience, and on being readmitted said, through their Spokesman:

'May it please your Majesty, we are the hogs.'

A HARMLESS VISITOR

At a meeting of the Golden League of Mystery a Woman was discovered, writing in a note-book. A member directed the attention of the Superb High Chairman to her, and she was asked to explain her presence there, and what she was doing.

'I came in for my own pleasure and instruction,' she said, 'and was so struck by the wisdom of the speakers that I could not help making a few notes.'

'Madam,' said the Superb High Chairman, 'we have no objection to visitors if they will pledge themselves not to publish anything they hear. Are you – on your honour as a lady, now, madam – are you not connected with some newspaper or other publication?'

'Good gracious, no!' cried the Woman, earnestly. 'Why, sir, I am an officer of the Women's Press Association!'

She was permitted to remain and presented with resolutions of apology.

AN INFLATED AMBITION

The President of a great Corporation went into a dry-goods shop and saw a placard which read:

'If You Don't See What You Want Ask For It.'

Approaching the shopkeeper, who had been nar-

rowly observing him as he read the placard, he was about to speak, when the shopkeeper called to a salesman.

'John, show this gentleman the earth.'

THE NO CASE

A Statesman who had been indicted by an unfeeling Grand Jury was arrested by a Sheriff and thrown into jail. As this was abhorrent to his fine spiritual nature, he sent for the District Attorney and asked that the case against him be dismissed.

'Upon what grounds?' asked the District Attorney.

'Lack of evidence to convict,' replied the accused.

'Do you happen to have the lack with you?' the official asked. 'I should like to see it.'

'With pleasure,' said the other; 'here it is.'

So saying he handed the other a cheque, which the District Attorney carefully examined, and then pronounced it the most complete absence of both proof and presumption that he had ever seen. He said it would acquit the poorest man in the world.

JUDGE AND RASH ACT

A Judge who had for years looked in vain for an opportunity for infamous distinction, but whom no litigant thought worth bribing, sat one day upon the Bench, lamenting his hard lot and threatening to put

an end to his life if business did not improve. Suddenly he found himself confronted by a dreadful figure clad in a shroud, whose pallor and stony eyes smote him with a horrible apprehension.

'Who are you,' he faltered, 'and why do you come here?'

'I am the Rash Act,' was the sepulchral reply; 'you may commit me.'

'No,' the Judge said, thoughtfully, 'no, that would be quite irregular. I do not sit to-day as a committing magistrate.'

THE PREROGATIVE OF MIGHT

A Slander travelling rapidly through the land upon his joyous mission was accosted by a Retraction and commanded to halt and be killed.

'Your career of mischief is at an end,' said the Retraction, drawing his club, rolling up his sleeves and spitting on his hands.

'Why should you slay me?' protested the Slander. 'Whatever my intentions were, I have been innocuous, for you have dogged my strides and counteracted my influence.'

'Dogged your grandmother!' said the Retraction, with contemptuous vulgarity of speech. 'In the order of nature it is appointed that we two shall never travel the same road.'

'How, then,' the Slander asked triumphantly, 'have you overtaken me?'

'I have not,' replied the Retraction; 'we have accidentally met. I came round the world the other way.'

But when he tried to execute his fell purpose he found that in the order of nature it was appointed that he himself perish miserably in the encounter.

AT LARGE — ONE TEMPER

A Turbulent Person was brought before a Judge to be tried for an assault with intent to commit murder, and it was proved that he had been variously obstreperous without apparent provocation, had affected the peripheries of several luckless fellow-citizens with the trunk of a small tree and afterward cleaned out the town. While trying to palliate these misdeeds, the Defendant's Attorney turned suddenly to the Judge, saying:

'Did your Honour ever lose your temper?'

'I fine you twenty-five dollars for contempt of court!' roared the Judge, in wrath. 'How dare you mention the loss of my temper in connection with this case?'

After a moment's silence the Attorney said, meekly:

'I thought my client might perhaps have found it.'

THE DIVIDED DELEGATION

A Delegation at Washington went to a New President, and said:

'Your Excellency, we are unable to agree upon a Favourite Son to represent us in your Cabinet.'

'Then,' said the New President, 'I shall have to lock you up until you do agree.'

So the Delegation was cast into the deepest dungeon beneath the moat, where it maintained a divided mind for many weeks, but finally reconciled its differences and asked to be taken before the New President.

'My children,' said he, 'nothing is so beautiful as harmony. My Cabinet selections were all made before our former interview, but you have supplied a noble instance of patriotism in subordinating your personal preferences to the general good. Go now to your beautiful homes and be happy.'

REJECTED SERVICES

A Heavy Operator, overtaken by a Reverse of Fortune, was bewailing his sudden fall from affluence to indigence.

'Do not weep,' said the Reverse of Fortune. 'You need not suffer alone. Name any one of the men who have opposed your schemes, and I will overtake *him*.'

'It is hardly worth while,' said the victim, earnestly. 'Not a soul of them has a cent. You have already visited them.'

DECEASED AND HEIRS

A Man died leaving a large estate and many sorrowful relations who claimed it. After some years, when

all but one had had judgment given against them, that one was awarded the estate, which he asked his Attorney to have appraised.

'There is nothing to appraise,' said the Attorney, pocketing his last fee.

'Then,' said the Successful Claimant, 'what good has all this litigation done me?'

'You have been a good client to me,' the Attorney replied, gathering up his books and papers, 'but I must say you betray a surprising ignorance of the purpose of litigation.'

POLITICIANS AND PLUNDER

Several Political Entities were dividing the spoils.

'I will take the management of the prisons,' said a Decent Respect for Public Opinion, 'and make a radical change.'

'And I,' said the Blotted Escutcheon, 'will retain my present general connection with affairs, while my friend here, the Soiled Ermine, will remain in the Judiciary.'

The Political Pot said it would not boil any more unless replenished from the Filthy Pool.

The Cohesive Power of Public Plunder quietly remarked that the two bosses would, he supposed, naturally be his share.

'No,' said the Lowest Depth of Degradation, 'they have already fallen to me.'

MAN AND WART

A Person with a Wart on His Nose met a Person similarly afflicted, and said:

'Let me propose your name for membership in the Imperial Order of Abnormal Proboscidians, of which I am the High Noble Toby and Surreptitious Treasurer. Two months ago I was the only member. One month ago there were two. To-day we number four Emperors of the Abnormal Proboscis in good standing – doubles every four weeks, see? That's geometrical progression – you know how that piles up. In a year and a-half every man in the country will have a wart on his nose. Powerful Order! Initiation, five dollars.'

'My friend,' said the Person Similarly Afflicted, 'here are five dollars. Keep my name off your books.

'Thank you kindly,' the Man with a Wart on His Nose replied, pocketing the money; 'it is just the same to us as if you joined. Good-bye.'

He went away, but in a little while he was back.

'I quite forgot to mention the monthly dues,' he said.

HIS FLY-SPECK MAJESTY

A Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions was seen picking his shins in the ocean.

'Why don't you come out on dry land?' said the Spectator. 'What are you in there for?'

'Sir,' replied the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, 'a ship is expected, bearing His Majesty the King of Fly-Speck Islands, and I wish to be the first to grasp the crowned hand.'

'But,' said the Spectator, 'you said in your famous speech before the Society for the Prevention of the Protrusion of Nail Heads from Plank Sidewalks that Kings are blood-smeared oppressors and hell-bound loafers.'

'My dear sir,' said the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, without removing his eyes from the horizon, 'you wander away into the strangest irrelevancies! I spoke of Kings in general.'

THE PUGILIST'S DIET

The Trainer of a Pugilist consulted a Physician regarding the champion's diet.

'Beef-steaks are too tender,' said the Physician; 'have his meat cut from the neck of a bull.'

'I thought the steaks more digestible,' the Trainer explained.

'That is very true,' said the Physician; 'but they do not sufficiently exercise the chin.'

OLD MAN AND PUPIL

A Beautiful Old Man, meeting a Sunday-School

Pupil, laid his hand tenderly upon the lad's head, saying: 'Listen, my son, to the words of the wise and heed the advice of the righteous.'

'All right,' said the Sunday-School Pupil; 'go ahead.'

'Oh, I haven't anything to tell you, really,' said the Beautiful Old Man. 'I am only observing one of the customs of age. I am a pirate.'

And when he had taken his hand from the lad's head the latter observed that his hair was full of clotted blood. Then the Beautiful Old Man went his way, instructing other youth.

A FORFEITED RIGHT

The Chief of the Weather Bureau having predicted a fair day, a Thrifty Person hastened to lay in a large stock of umbrellas, which he exposed for sale on the sidewalk; but the weather remained clear and nobody would buy. Thereupon the Thrifty Person brought an action against the Chief of the Weather Bureau for the cost of the umbrellas.

'Your Honour,' said the Defendant's Attorney, when the case was called, 'I move that this astonishing action be dismissed. Not only is my client in no way responsible for the loss, but he distinctly forecast the fair weather that caused it.'

'That is just it, your Honour,' replied the Counsel for the Plaintiff; 'by making a correct forecast the

defendant fooled my client in the only way that he could do so. He has lied so much and so notoriously that he has no right to tell the truth.'

Judgment for the plaintiff.

REVENGE

An Insurance Agent was trying to induce a Hard Man to Deal With to take out a policy on his house. After listening to him for an hour, while he painted in vivid colours the extreme danger of fire consuming the house, the Hard Man to Deal With said:

'Do you really think it likely that my house will burn down inside the time that my policy will run?'

'Certainly,' replied the Insurance Agent; 'have I not been trying all this time to convince you that I do?'

'Then,' said the Hard Man to Deal With, 'why are you so eager to have your Company bet me money that it will not?'

The Agent was silent and thoughtful for a moment; then he drew the other apart into an unfrequented place and whispered in his ear:

'My friend, I will impart to you a dark secret. Years ago the Company betrayed my sweetheart by promise of marriage. Under an assumed name I have wormed myself into its service for revenge; and as there is a heaven above us, I will have its heart's blood!'

AN OPTIMIST

Two Frogs in the belly of a snake were considering their altered circumstances.

'This is pretty hard luck,' said one.

'Don't jump to conclusions,' the other said; 'we are out of the wet and provided with board and lodging.'

'With lodging, certainly,' said the First Frog; 'but I don't see the board.'

'You are a croaker,' the other explained. 'We are the board.'

TWO FOOTPADS

Two Footpads sat at their grog in a roadside resort, comparing the evening's adventures.

'I stood up the Chief of Police,' said the First Footpad, 'and got away with what he had.'

'And I,' said the Second Footpad, 'stood up the United States District Attorney, and got away with –'

'Good Lord!' interrupted the other in astonishment and admiration, 'you got away with what that fellow had?'

'No,' the unfortunate narrator explained, 'with a small part of what *I* had.'

EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE

During the Civil War a Patriot was passing through

the State of Maryland with a pass from the President to join Grant's army and see the fighting. Stopping a day at Annapolis, he visited the shop of a well-known optician and ordered seven powerful telescopes, one for every day in the week. In recognition of this munificent patronage of the State's languishing industries, the Governor commissioned him a colonel.

THE BASKING CYCLONE

A Negro in a boat, gathering driftwood, saw a sleeping Alligator and thinking it was a log, fell to estimating the number of shingles it would make for his new cabin. Having satisfied his mind on that point, he stuck his boat-hook into the beast's back to harvest his good fortune. Thereupon the saurian emerged from his dream and, greatly to the surprise of the man-and-brother, took to the water, making a terrible commotion!

'I never befo' seen sech a cyclone as dat,' the Negro exclaimed as soon as he had recovered his breath. 'It done carry away de ruf of my house!'

A VALUABLE SUGGESTION

A Big Nation having a quarrel with a Little Nation, resolved to terrify its antagonist by a grand naval demonstration in the latter's principal port. So the

Big Nation assembled all its ships of war from all over the world, and was about to send them three hundred and fifty thousands miles to the place of rendezvous, when the President of the Big Nation received the following note from the President of the Little Nation:

'My great and good friend, I hear that you are going to show us your navy in order to impress us with a sense of your power. How needless the expense! To prove to you that we already know all about it I inclose herewith a list and description of all the ships and guns that you have.'

The great and good friend was so struck by the hard sense of the letter that he kept his navy at home, saving on thousand million dollars. This economy enabled him to buy a satisfactory decision when the cause of the quarrel was submitted to arbitration.

OPTIMIST AND CYNIC

A man who had experienced the favours of fortune and was an Optimist, met a man who had experienced an optimist and was a Cynic. So the Cynic turned out of the road to let the Optimist roll by in his gold carriage.

'My son,' said the Optimist, stopping the gold carriage, 'you look as if you had not a friend in the world.'

'I don't know if I have or not,' replied the Cynic, 'for you have the world.'

THE TAKEN HAND

A Successful Man of Business having occasion to write to a Thief expressed a wish to see him and shake hands.

'No,' replied the Thief, 'there are some things that I will not take – among them your hand.'

'You must use a little strategy,' said a Philosopher to whom the Successful Man of Business had reported the Thief's haughty reply. 'Leave your hand out some night and he will take it.'

So one night the Successful Man of Business left his hand out of a neighbour's pocket and the Thief took it with avidity.

POET AND EDITOR

'My dear sir,' said the Editor to the Poet who had called to see about his poem, 'I regret to say that owing to an unfortunate altercation in this office the greater part of your manuscript is illegible; a bottle of ink was upset upon it, blotting out all but the first line – that is to say –

' "—he autumn leaves were falling, falling."

'Unluckily, not having read the poem, I was unable to supply the incidents that followed; otherwise we could have given them in our own words. If the news is not stale, and has not already appeared in the other papers, perhaps you will kindly relate what occurred,

while I make notes of it. "The autumn leaves were falling, falling." Go on.'

'What!' said the Poet, 'do you expect me to reproduce the entire poem from memory?'

'Only the substance of it – just the leading facts. We will add whatever is necessary in the way of amplification and embellishment. It will detain you but a moment. "The autumn leaves were falling, falling –" Now, then.'

There was a sound of a slow getting up and going away. The chronicler of passing events sat through it, motionless, with suspended pen; and when the movement was complete Poesy was represented in that place by nothing but a warm spot on a chair.

AT THE POLE

After a great expenditure of life and treasure a Daring Explorer had succeeded in reaching the North Pole, when he was approached by a Native Galeut who lived there.

'Good morning,' said the Native Galeut. 'I'm very glad to see you, but why did you come here?'

'Glory,' said the Daring Explorer, curtly.

'Yes, yes, I know,' the other persisted; 'but of what benefit to man is your discovery? To what truths does it give access which were inaccessible before? – facts, I mean, having a scientific value?'

'I'll be Tom scatted if I know,' the great man replied, frankly; 'you will have to ask the Scientist of the Expedition.'

But the Scientist of the Expedition explained that he had been so engrossed with the care of his instruments and the study of his tables that he had found no time to think of it.

PARTY MANAGER AND GENTLEMAN

A Party Manager said to a Gentleman whom he saw minding his own business:

'How much will you pay for a nomination to office?'

'Nothing,' the Gentleman replied.

'But you will contribute something to the campaign fund to assist in your election, will you not?' asked the Party Manager, winking.

'Oh, no,' said the Gentleman, gravely. 'If the people wish me to work for them they must hire me without solicitation. I am very comfortable without office.'

'But,' urged the Party Manager, 'an election is a thing to be desired. It is a high honour to be a servant of the people.'

'If servitude is a high honour,' the Gentleman said, 'it would be indecent for me to seek it; and if obtained by my own exertion it would be no honour.'

'Well,' persisted the Party Manager, 'you will at least, I hope, indorse the party platform.'

The Gentleman replied: 'It is improbable that its authors have accurately expressed my views without consulting me; and if I indorsed their work without approving it I should be a liar.'

'You are a detestable hypocrite and an idiot!' shouted the Party Manager.

'Even your good opinion of my fitness,' replied the Gentleman, 'shall not persuade me.'

AN UNSPEAKABLE IMBECILE

A Judge said to a Convicted Assassin:

'Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why the death-sentence should not be passed upon you?'

'Will what I say make any difference?' asked the Convicted Assassin.

'I do not see how it can,' the Judge answered, reflectively. 'No, it will not.'

'Then,' said the doomed one, 'I should like to remark that you are the most unspeakable old imbecile in seven States and the District of Columbia.'

MINE-OWNER AND JACKASS

While the Owner of a Silver Mine was on his way to attend a convention of his species he was accosted by a Jackass, who said:

'By an unjust discrimination against quadrupeds I

am made ineligible to a seat in your convention; so I am compelled to seek representation through you.'

'It will give me great pleasure, sir,' said the Owner of a Silver Mine, 'to serve one so closely allied to me in – in – well, you know,' he added, with a significant gesture of his two hands upward from the sides of his head. 'What do you want?'

'Oh, nothing – nothing at all for myself individually,' replied the Donkey; 'but his country's welfare should be a patriot's supreme care. If Americans are to retain the sacred liberties for which their fathers strove Congress must declare our independence of European dictation by maintaining the price of mules.'

A NEEDFUL WAR

The people of Kamzembla had an antipathy to the people of Novakatka and set upon some sailors of a Novakatkan vessel, killing two and wounding twelve. The King of Kamzembla having refused either to apologise or pay, the King of Novakatka made war upon him, saying that it was necessary to show that Novakatkans must not be slaughtered. In the battles that ensued the people of Kamzembla slaughtered two thousand Novakatkans and wounded twelve thousand. But the Kamzemblans were unsuccessful, which so chargrined them that never thereafter in all their land was a Novakatkan secure in property or life.

DOG AND DOCTOR

A Dog that had seen a Doctor attending the burial of a wealthy patient, said: 'When do you expect to dig it up?'

'Why should I dig it up?' the Doctor asked.

'When I bury a bone,' said the Dog, 'it is with an intention to uncover it later and pick it.'

'The bones that I bury,' said the Doctor, 'are those that I can no longer pick.'

LEGISLATOR AND CITIZEN

A former Legislator asked a Most Respectable Citizen for a letter to the Governor, recommending him for appointment as Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs.

'Sir,' said the Most Respectable Citizen, austerely, 'were you not once in the State Senate?'

'Not so bad as that, sir, I assure you,' was the reply. 'I was a member of the Slower House. I was expelled for selling my influence.'

'And you dare to ask for mine!' shouted the Most Respectable Citizen. 'You have the impudence? A man who will accept bribes will probably offer them. Do you mean to – '

'I should not think of making a corrupt proposal to

you, sir; but if I were Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs I might have some influence with the water-front population, and be able to help you make your fight for Coroner.'

'In that case I do not feel justified in denying you the letter.'

CITIZEN AND SNAKES

A Public-spirited Citizen who had failed miserably in trying to secure a National political convention for his city suffered acutely from dejection. While in that frame of mind he leaned thoughtlessly against a druggist's show-window, wherein were one hundred and fifty kinds of assorted snakes. The glass breaking, the reptiles all escaped into the street.

'When you can't do what you wish,' said the Public-spirited Citizen, 'it is worth while to do what you can.'

THE RAINMAKER

An Officer of the Government, with a great outfit of mule-waggons loaded with balloons, kites, dynamite bombs, and electrical apparatus, halted in the midst of a desert where there had been no rain for ten years and set up a camp. After several months of preparation and an expenditure of a million dollars all was in readiness, and a series of tremendous explosions occurred

on the earth and in the sky. This was followed by a great downpour of rain, which washed the unfortunate Officer of the Government and the outfit off the face of creation and affected the agricultural heart with joy too deep for utterance. A Newspaper Reporter who had just arrived escaped by climbing a hill near by, and there he found the Sole Survivor of the expedition – a mule-driver – down on his knees behind a mesquite bush, praying with extreme fervour.

'Oh, you can't stop it that way,' said the Reporter.

'My fellow-traveller to the bar of God,' replied the Sole Survivor, looking up over his shoulder, 'your understanding is in darkness. I am not stopping this great blessing; under Providence, I am bringing it.'

'That is a pretty good joke,' said the Reporter, laughing as well as he could in the strangling rain – 'a mule-driver's prayer answered!'

'Child of levity and scoffing,' replied the other; 'you err again, misled by these humble habiliments. I am the Rev. Ezekiel Thrifft, a minister of the gospel, now in the service of the great manufacturing firm of Skinn & Sheer. They make balloons, kites, dynamite bombs and electrical apparatus.'

FORTUNE AND FABULIST

A Writer of Fables was passing through a lonely forest, when he met a Fortune. Greatly alarmed, he

tried to climb a tree, but the Fortune pulled him down and bestowed itself upon him with cruel persistence.

'Why did you try to run away?' said the Fortune, when his struggles had ceased and his screams were stilled. 'Why do you glare at me so inhospitably? '

'I don't know what you are,' replied the Writer of Fables, deeply disturbed.

'I am wealth; I am respectability,' the Fortune explained; 'I am elegant houses, a yacht and a clean shirt every day. I am leisure, I am travel, wine, a shiny hat and an unshiny coat. I am enough to eat.'

'All right,' said the Writer of Fables, in a whisper; 'but for goodness' sake speak lower!'

'Why so?' the Fortune asked, in surprise.

'So as not to wake me,' replied the Writer of Fables, a holy calm brooding upon his beautiful face.

A SMILING IDOL

An Idol said to a Missionary, 'My friend, why do you seek to bring me into contempt? If it had not been for me what would you have been? Remember thy creator that thy days be long in the land.'

'I confess,' replied the Missionary, fingering a number of ten-cent pieces which a Sunday-school in his own country had forwarded to him, 'that I am a product of you, but I protest that you cannot quote Scripture

with accuracy and point. Therefore will I continue to go up against you with the sword of the Spirit.'

Shortly afterwards the Idol's worshippers held a great religious ceremony at the base of his pedestal, and as a part of the rites the Missionary was roasted whole. As the tongue was removed for the high priest's table, 'Ah,' said the Idol to himself, 'that is the sword of the Spirit – the only sword that is less dangerous when unsheathed.'

And he smiled so pleasantly at his own wit that the provinces of M'gwana and Scowow were affected with a blight.

PHILOSOPHERS THREE

A Bear, a Fox and an Opossum were attacked by an inundation.

'Death loves a coward,' said the Bear, and went forward to fight the flood.

'What a fool!' said the Fox. 'I know a trick worth two of that.' And he slipped into a hollow stump.

'There are malevolent forces,' said the Opossum, 'which the wise will neither confront nor avoid. The thing is to know the nature of your antagonist.'

So saying the Opossum lay down and pretended to be dead.

THE BONELESS KING

Some Apes who had deposed their king fell at once

into dissension and anarchy. In this strait they sent a Deputation to a neighbouring tribe to consult the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World.

'My children,' said, the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World, when he had heard the Deputation, 'you did right in ridding yourselves of tyranny, but your tribe is not sufficiently advanced to dispense with the forms of monarchy. Entice the tyrant back with fair promises, kill him and enthrone. The skeleton of even the most lawless despot makes a good constitutional sovereign.'

At this the Deputation were greatly abashed. 'It is impossible,' they said, moving away; 'our king has no skeleton; he was a stuffed king.'

A TRANSPOSITION

Travelling through the sage-brush country a Jackass met a Rabbit, who exclaimed in great astonishment:

'Good heavens! how did you grow so big? You are doubtless the largest rabbit living.'

'No,' said the Jackass, 'you are the smallest donkey.'

After a good deal of fruitless argument the question was referred for decision to a passing Coyote, who was a bit of a demagogue and desirous to stand well with both.

'Gentlemen,' said he, 'you are both right, as was to have been expected of persons so gifted with appliances

for receiving instruction from the wise. You, sir,' – turning to the superior animal – 'are, as he has accurately observed, a rabbit. And you ' – to the other – 'are correctly described as a jackass. In transposing your names man has acted with incredible folly.'

They were so pleased with the decision that they declared the Coyote their candidate for the Grizzly Bearship; but whether he ever obtained the office history does not relate.

SIX AND ONE

The Committee on Gerrymander worked late into the night drawing intricate lines on a map of the State, and being weary sought repose in a game of poker. At the close of the game the six Republican members were bankrupt and the single Democrat had all the money. On the next day, when the Committee was called to order for business, one of the luckless six mounted his legs, and said.:

'Mr. Chairman, before we bend to our noble task of purifying politics in the interest of good government I wish to say a word of the untoward events of last evening. If my memory serves me the disasters which overtook the Majority of this honourable body always befell when it was the Minority's deal. It is my solemn conviction, Mr. Chairman, and to its affirmation I pledge my life, my sacred fortune and my honour, that

that wicked and unscrupulous Minority redistricted the cards!'

UNCALCULATING ZEAL

A man-eating tiger was ravaging the Kingdom of Damnasia, and the King, greatly concerned for the lives and limbs of his subjects, promised his daughter Zodroulra to any man who would kill the animal. After some days Camaraladdin appeared before the King and demanded the reward.

'But where is the tiger?' the King asked.

'May jackasses sing above my uncle's grave,' replied Camaraladdin, 'if I dared go within a league of him!'

'Wretch!' cried the King, unsheathing his consoler-under-disappointment; 'how dare you claim my daughter when you have done nothing to earn her?'

'Thou are wiser, O King, than Solyman the Great, and thy servant is as dust in the tomb of thy dog, yet thou errest. I did not, it is true, kill the tiger, but behold! I have brought thee the scalp of a man who had accumulated five million pieces of gold and was after more.'

The King drew his consoler-under-disappointment, and flicking off Camaraladdin's head said:

'Learn, caitiff, the inexpediency of uncalculating zeal. If the millionaire had been let alone he would have devoured the tiger.'

THE HONEST CITIZEN

A Political Preferment, labelled with its price, was canvassing the State to find a purchaser. One day it offered itself to a Truly Good Man who after examining the label and finding the price was twice as great as he was willing to pay spurned the Political Preferment from his door. Then the People said: 'Behold, this is an honest citizen!' And the Truly Good Man humbly confessed that it was true.

A CREAKING TAIL

An American Statesman who had twisted the tail of the British Lion until his arms ached was at last rewarded by a sharp, rasping sound.

'I knew your fortitude would give out after a while,' said the American Statesman, delighted; 'your agony attests my political power.'

'Agony I know not!' said the British Lion, yawning; 'the swivel in my tail needs a few drops of oil, that is all.'

SPORTSMAN AND SQUIRREL

A Sportsman who had wounded a Squirrel, which was making desperate efforts to drag itself away, ran after it with a stick, exclaiming:

'Poor thing! I will put it out of its misery.'

At that moment the Squirrel stopped from exhaustion, and looking up at its enemy, said:

'I don't venture to doubt the sincerity of your compassion, though it comes rather late, but you seem to lack the faculty of observation. Do you not perceive by my actions that the dearest wish of my heart is to continue in my misery?'

At this exposure of his hypocrisy the Sportsman was so overcome with shame and remorse that he would not strike the Squirrel, but pointing it out to his dog, walked thoughtfully away.

FOGY AND SHEIK

A Fogy who lived in a cave near a great caravan route returned to his home one day and saw, near by, a great concourse of men and animals, and in their midst a tower, at the foot of which something with wheels smoked and panted like an exhausted horse. He sought the Sheik of the Outfit.

'What sin art thou committing now, O son of a Christian dog?' said the Fogy, with a truly Oriental politeness.

'Boring for water, you black-and-tan galoot!' replied the Sheik of the Outfit, with that ready repartee which distinguishes the Unbeliever.

'Knowest thou not, thou whelp of darkness and father of disordered livers,' cried the Fogy, 'that water

will cause grass to spring up here, and trees and possibly even flowers? Knowest thou not that thou art, in truth, producing an oasis?'

'And don't you know,' said the Sheik of the Outfit, 'that caravans will then stop here for rest and refreshment, giving you a chance to steal the camels, the horses and the goods?'

'May the wild hog defile my grave, but thou speakest wisdom!' the Fogy replied, with the dignity of his race, extending his hand. 'Sheik.'

They shook.

AT HEAVEN'S GATE

Having risen from the tomb, a Woman presented herself at the gate of Heaven, and knocked with a trembling hand.

'Madam,' said Saint Peter, rising and approaching the wicket, 'whence do you come?'

'From San Francisco,' replied the Woman, with embarrassment, as great beads of perspiration spangled her spiritual brow.

'Never mind, my good girl,' the Saint said, compassionately. 'Eternity is a long time; you can live that down.'

'But that, if you please, is not all.' The Woman was growing more and more confused. 'I poisoned my husband. I chopped up my babies. I – '

'Ah,' said the Saint, with sudden austerity, 'your

confession suggests a grave possibility. Were you a member of the Women's Press Association?'

The lady drew herself up and replied with warmth: 'I was not.'

The gates of pearl and jasper swung back upon their golden hinges, making the most ravishing music, and the Saint, stepping aside, bowed low, saying:

'Enter, then, into thine eternal rest.'

But the Woman hesitated.

'The poisoning – the chopping – the – the – ' she stammered.

'Of no consequence, I assure you. We are not going to be hard on a lady who did not belong to the Women's Press Association. Take a harp.'

'But I applied for membership – I was blackballed.'

'Take two harps.'

WASTED SWEETS

A Candidate canvassing his district met a Nurse wheeling a Baby in a carriage and, stooping, imprinted a kiss upon the Baby's clammy muzzle. Rising, he saw a Man, who laughed.

'Why do you laugh?' asked the Candidate.

'Because,' replied the Man, 'the Baby belongs to an Orphan Asylum.'

'But the Nurse,' said the Candidate – 'the Nurse will surely relate the touching incident wherever she goes, and perhaps write to her former master.'

'The Nurse,' said the Man who had laughed, 'is an illiterate mute.'

THE CATTED ANARCHIST

An Anarchist Orator who had been struck in the face with a Dead Cat by some Respecter of Law to him unknown, had the Dead Cat arrested and taken before a Magistrate.

'Why do you appeal to the law?' said the Magistrate – 'you who go in for abolition of law.'

'That,' replied the Anarchist, who was not without a certain hardness of head, 'that is none of your business; I am not bound to be consistent. You sit here to do justice between me and this Dead Cat.'

'Very well,' said the Magistrate, putting on the black cap and a solemn look; 'as the accused makes no defence, and is undoubtedly guilty, I sentence her to be eaten by the public executioner; and as that position happens to be vacant, I appoint you to it, without bonds.'

One of the most delighted spectators at the execution was the unknown Respecter of Law, who had flung the condemned.

THE HONOURABLE MEMBER

A member of a Legislature who had pledged himself

to his Constituents not to steal brought home at the end of the session a large part of the dome of the Capitol. Thereupon the Constituents held an indignation meeting and passed a resolution of tar and feathers.

'You are most unjust,' said the Member of the Legislature. 'It is true I promised you that I would not steal; but had I ever promised you that I would not lie?'

The Constituents said he was an honourable man and elected him to the United States Congress, unpledged and unfledged.

THE EXPATRIATED BOSS

A Boss who had gone to Canada was taunted by a Citizen of Montreal with having fled to avoid prosecution.

'You do me a grave injustice,' said the Boss, parting with a pair of tears. 'I came to Canada solely because of its political attractions; its Government is said to be the most corrupt in the world.'

'Pray forgive me,' said the Citizen of Montreal.

They fell upon each other's neck, and at the conclusion of that touching rite the Boss had two watches.

AN INADEQUATE FEE

An Ox unable to extricate himself from the mire

into which he sank was advised to make use of a Political Pull. When the Political Pull had arrived the Ox said: 'My good friend, please make fast to me and let nature take her course.'

So the Political Pull made fast to the Ox's head and nature took her course: the Ox was drawn, first, from the mire and next from his skin. Then the Political Pull looked back upon the good fat carcase of beef that he was dragging to his lair and said, with a discontented spirit: 'That is hardly my customary fee; I'll take home this first instalment, then return for the skin.'

A STATESMAN

A Statesman who attended a meeting of a Chamber of Commerce rose to speak, but was objected to on the ground that he had nothing to do with commerce.

'Mr. Chairman,' said an Aged Member, rising, 'I conceive that the objection is not well taken; the gentleman's connection with commerce is close and intimate. He is a commodity.'

TWO DOGS

The Dog as created had a rigid tail, but after some centuries of a cheerless existence, unappreciated by Man, who made him work for his living, he implored the Creator to endow him with a wag. This being done, he was able to dissemble his resentment with a

sign of affection, and the earth was his and the fullness thereof. Observing this, the Politician (an animal created later) petitioned that a wag might be given him too. As he was incaudate it was conferred upon his chin, which he now wags with great profit and gratification except when he is at his meals.

JUDGE AND PLAINTIFF

A Man of Experience in Business was awaiting the judgment of the Court in an action for damages that he had brought against a railway company. The door opened and the Judge of the Court entered.

'Well,' said he, 'I am going to decide your case to-day. If I should decide in your favour I wonder how you would express your satisfaction.'

'Sir,' said the Man of Experience in Business, 'I should risk your anger by offering you one-half the sum awarded.'

'Did I say I was going to decide that case?' said the Judge, abruptly, as if awakening from a dream. 'Dear me, how absent-minded I am! I mean I have already decided it, and judgment has been entered for the full amount that you sued for.'

'Did I say I would give you one-half?' said the Man of Experience in Business, coldly. 'Dear me, how near I came to being a rascal! I mean, that I am greatly obliged to you.'

RETURN OF THE REPRESENTATIVE

Hearing that the Legislature had adjourned, the People of an Assembly District held a mass-meeting to devise a suitable punishment for their Dishonourable Representative. By one speaker it was proposed that he be disembowelled, by another that he be made to run the gauntlet. Some favoured hanging, some thought that it would do him good to appear in a suit of tar and feathers. An Old Man famous for his wisdom and his habit of drooling on his shirt-front, suggested that they first catch their hare. So the Chairman appointed a committee to watch for the victim at midnight and take him as he should attempt to sneak into town across-lots from the tamarack swamp. At this point in the proceedings they were interrupted by the sound of a brass band. Their Dishonourable Representative was driving up from the railway station in a coach-and-four, with music and a banner. A few moments later he entered the hall, went upon the platform, and said it was the proudest moment of his life. (Cheers.)

THE MIRROR

A silken-eared Spaniel who traced his descent from King Charles the Second chanced to look into a mirror that was leaning against the wainscotting of a room on

the ground floor of his mistress's house. Seeing his reflection, he supposed it to be another dog, outside, and said:

'I can chew up any such milksoppy pup as that, and I will.'

So he ran out of doors and around to the side of the house where he fancied the enemy was. It so happened that at that moment a Bulldog sat there sunning his teeth. The Spaniel stopped short in dire consternation and after regarding the Bulldog a moment from a safe distance said:

'I don't know whether you cultivate the arts of peace or your flag is flung to the battle and the breeze and your voice is for war. If you are a civilian the windows of this house flatter you worse than a newspaper, but if you're a soldier they do you a grave injustice.'

This speech being unintelligible to the Bull-dog, he only civilly smiled, which so terrified the Spaniel that he dropped dead in his tracks.

SAINT AND SINNER

'My friend,' said a distinguished officer of the Salvation Army to a Most Wicked Sinner, 'I was once a drunkard, a thief, an assassin. The Divine Grace has made me what I am.'

The Most Wicked Sinner looked at him from head to foot. 'Henceforth,' he said, 'the Divine Grace, I fancy, will let well alone.'

A WEARY ECHO

A Convention of female writers, which for two days had been stuffing Woman's couch with goose-quills and hailing the down of a new era, adjourned with unabated enthusiasm, shouting, '*Place aux dames!*' And Echo wearily replied, 'Oh, damn.'

THREE RECRUITS

A Farmer, an Artisan and a Labourer went to the King of their country and complained that they were compelled to support a large standing army of consumers, who did nothing for their keep.

'Very well,' said the King, 'my subjects' wishes are the highest law.'

So he disbanded his army and the consumers became producers also. The sale of their products so brought down prices that farming was ruined and their skilled and unskilled labour drove artisans and labourers into almshouses and highways. In a few years the national distress was so great that the Farmer, the Artisan and the Labourer petitioned the King to restore the standing army.

'What!' said the King; 'you wish to support those idle consumers again?'

'No, your Majesty,' they replied; 'we wish to enlist.'

THE ANCIENT ORDER

Hardly had that ancient order, the Sultans of Exceeding Splendour, been completely founded by the Grand Flashing Inaccessible, when a question arose as to what should be the title of address among the members. Some wanted it to be simply 'my lord,' others held out for 'your dukeness,' and still others preferred 'my sovereign liege.' Finally the gorgeous jewel of the order gleaming upon the breast of every member suggested 'your badgesty,' which was adopted and the order became popularly known as the Kings of Catarrh.

A FATAL DISORDER

A Dying Man who had been shot was requested by officers of the law to make a statement and be quick about it.

'You were assaulted without provocation, of course,' said the District Attorney, preparing to set down the answer.

'No,' replied the Dying Man, 'I was the aggressor.'

'Yes, I understand,' said the District Attorney; 'you committed the aggression – you were compelled to, as it were. You did it in self-defence.'

'I don't think he would have hurt me if I had let him alone,' said the other. 'No, I fancy he was a man

of peace and would not have hurt a fly. I brought such a pressure to bear on him that he naturally had to yield – he couldn't hold out. If he had refused to shoot me I don't see how I could decently have continued his acquaintance.'

'Good heavens!' exclaimed the District Attorney, throwing down his notebook and pencil; 'this is all quite irregular. I can't make use of such an ante-mortem statement as that.'

'I never before knew a man to tell the truth,' said the Chief of Police, 'when dying of violence.'

'Violence nothing!' the Police Surgeon said, pulling out and inspecting the man's tongue – 'it is the truth that is killing him.'

A TALISMAN

Having been summoned to serve as a juror, a Prominent Citizen sent a physician's certificate stating that he was afflicted with softening of the brain.

'The gentleman is excused,' said the Judge, handing back the certificate to the person who had brought it – 'he has a brain.'

AN ANTIDOTE

A Young Ostrich came to its Mother, groaning with pain and with its wings tightly crossed upon its stomach.

'What have you been eating?' the Mother asked, with solicitude.

'Nothing but a keg of nails,' was the reply.

'What!' exclaimed the Mother, 'a whole keg of nails, at your age! Why, you will kill yourself that way. Go quickly, my child, and swallow a claw-hammer.'

CONGRESS AND PEOPLE

Successive Congresses having greatly impoverished the People, they were discouraged and wept copiously.

'Why do you weep?' inquired an Angel who had perched upon a tree near by.

'They have taken all we have,' replied the People – 'excepting,' they added, noting the suggestive visitant – 'excepting our hope in Heaven. Thank God they cannot deprive us of that!'

But at last came the Congress of 1889!

SHIP AND MAN

Seeing a ship sailing by upon the sea of politics, toward the Presidency, an Ambitious Person started in hot pursuit along the strand; but the people's eyes being fixed upon the ship no one observed the pursuer. This greatly annoyed him, and, recollecting that he was not aquatic, he stopped and shouted across the waves' tumultuous roar:

'Take my name off the passenger list.'

Back to him over the waters, hollow and heartless,

like laughter in a tomb, rang the voice of the Skipper:

"Tain't on!'

And there, in the focus of a million pairs of convergent eyes, the Ambitious Person sat him down between the sun and moon and murmured sadly to his own soul:

'Marooned, by thunder!'

THE JUSTICE AND HIS ACCUSER

An eminent Justice of the Supreme Court of Gowk was accused of having obtained his appointment by fraud.

'You wander,' he said to the Accuser; 'it is of little importance how I obtained my power; it is only important how I have used it.'

'I confess,' said the Accuser, 'that in comparison with the rascally way in which you have conducted yourself on the Bench the rascally way in which you got there does seem rather a trifle.'

AN AEROPHOBE

A Celebrated Divine having affirmed the fallibility of the Bible, was asked why, then, he preached the religion founded on it.

'If it is fallible,' he replied, 'there is the greater reason that I explain it, lest it mislead.'

'Then am I to infer,' said his Questioner, 'that *you* are not fallible?'

'You are to infer that I am not pneumaphagous.'

THE THRIFT OF STRENGTH

A Weak Man going downhill met a Strong Man going up, and said:

'I take this direction because it requires less exertion not from choice. I pray you, sir, assist me to regain the summit.'

'Gladly,' said the Strong Man, his face illuminated with the glory of his thought. 'I have always considered my strength a sacred gift in trust for my fellow-men. I will take you up with me. Go behind me and push.'

THE TYRANT FROG

A Snake swallowing a frog head-first was approached by a Naturalist with a stick.

'Ah, my deliverer,' said the Snake as well as he could, 'you have arrived just in time; this reptile, you see, is pitching into me without provocation.'

'Sir,' replied the Naturalist, 'I need a snakeskin for my collection, but if you had not explained I should not have molested you, for I thought you were at dinner.'

TWO POLITICIANS

Two Politicians were exchanging ideas regarding the rewards for public service.

'The reward that I most desire,' said the First Politician, 'is the gratitude of my fellow-citizens.'

'That would be very gratifying, no doubt,' said the Second Politician, 'but, alas! in order to obtain it one has to retire from politics.'

For an instant they gazed upon each other with inexpressible tenderness; then the First Politician murmured, 'God's will be done! Since we cannot hope for reward let us be content with what we have.'

And lifting their right hands for a moment from the public treasury they swore to be content.

THE FUGITIVE OFFICE

A Traveller arriving at the capital of a nation saw a vast plain outside the wall, filled with struggling and shouting men. While he looked upon the alarming spectacle an Office broke away from the throng and took shelter in a tomb near to where he stood, the crowd being too intent upon hammering one another to observe that the cause of their contention had departed.

'Poor bruised and bleeding creature,' said the compassionate Traveller, 'what was your offence?'

'I "sought the man," ' said the Office.

HIGHWAYMAN AND TRAVELLER

A Highwayman confronted a Traveller, and covering him with a firearm, shouted: 'Your money or your life!'

'My good friend,' said the Traveller, 'according to the terms of your demand my money will save my life, my life my money; you imply that you will take one or the other, but not both. If that is what you mean, please be good enough to take my life.'

'That is not what I mean,' said the Highwayman; 'you cannot save your money by giving up your life.'

'Then take it anyhow,' the Traveller said. 'If it will not save my money it is good for nothing.'

The Highwayman was so pleased with the Traveller's philosophy and wit that he took him into partnership and this splendid combination of talent started a newspaper.

THE ELIGIBLE SON-IN-LAW

A Truly Clever Person who conducted a savings bank and lent money to his sisters and his cousins and his aunts was approached by a Tatterdemalion who applied for a loan of one hundred thousand dollars.

'What security have you to offer?' asked the Truly Clever Person.

'The best in the world,' the applicant replied, confidentially; 'I am about to become your son-in-law.'

'That would indeed be gilt-edged,' said the Banker, gravely; 'but what claim have you to the hand of my daughter?'

'One that cannot be lightly denied,' said the Tatterdemalion. 'I am about to become worth one hundred thousand dollars.'

Unable to detect a weak point in this scheme of mutual advantage, the Financier gave the Promoter in Disguise an order for the money and wrote a note to his wife directing her to count out the girl.

STATESMAN AND HORSE

A Statesman who had saved his country was returning from Washington on foot, when he met a Race Horse going at full speed, and stopped him.

'Turn about and travel the other way,' said the Statesman, 'and I will keep you company as far as my home. The advantages of travelling together are obvious.'

'I cannot do that,' said the Race Horse; 'I am following my master to Washington. I did not go fast enough to suit him, and he has gone on ahead.'

'Who is your master?' inquired the Statesman.

'He is a Statesman who saved his country,' answered the Race Horse.

'There appears to be some mistake,' the other said. 'Why did he wish to travel so fast?'

'So as to be there in time to get the country that he saved.'

'I guess he got it,' said the other, and limped along, sighing.

POLICEMAN AND CITIZEN

A Policeman finding a man who had fallen in a fit said, 'This man is drunk,' and began beating him on the head with his club. A passing Citizen said:

'Why do you murder a man that is already harmless?'

Thereupon the Policeman left the man in a fit and attacked the Citizen, who after receiving several severe contusions ran away.

'Alas,' said the Policeman, 'why did I not attack the sober one before exhausting myself upon the other?'

Thenceforward he pursued that plan, and by zeal and diligence rose to be Chief, and sobriety is unknown in the region subject to his sway.

MAN AND BIRD

A Man with a Shotgun said to a Bird:

'It is all nonsense, you know, about shooting being a cruel sport. I put my skill against your cunning – that is all there is of it. It is a fair game.'

'True,' said the Bird, 'but I don't wish to play.'

'Why not?' inquired the Man with a Shotgun.

'The game,' the Bird replied, 'is fair as you say; the chances are about even; but consider the stake. I am in it for you, but what is there in it for me?'

Not being prepared with an answer to the question, the Man with a Shotgun sagaciously removed the propounder.

WRITER AND TRAMPS

An Ambitious Writer distinguished for the condition of his linen was travelling the high road to fame, when he met a Tramp.

'What is the matter with your shirt?' inquired the Tramp.

'It bears the marks of that superb unconcern which is the characteristic of genius,' replied the Ambitious Writer, contemptuously passing him by.

Resting by the wayside a little later, the Tramp carved upon the smooth bark of a birch-tree the words, 'John Gump, Champion Genius.'

THE GOOD GOVERNMENT

'What a happy land you are!' said a Republican Form of Government to a Sovereign State. 'Be good enough to lie still while I walk upon you, singing the praises of universal suffrage and descanting upon the blessings

of civil and religious liberty. In the meantime, you can relieve your feelings by cursing the one-man power and the effete monarchies of Europe.'

'My public servants have been fools and rogues from the date of your accession to power,' replied the State; 'my legislative bodies, both State and municipal, are bands of thieves; my taxes are insupportable; my courts are corrupt; my cities are a disgrace to civilisation; my corporations have their hands at the throat of every private interest – all my affairs are in disorder and criminal confusion.'

'That is all very true,' said the Republican Form of Government, putting on its hobnail shoes; 'but consider how I thrill you every Fourth of July.'

THREE OF A KIND

A Lawyer was retained for the defence of a Burglar whom the police had taken after a desperate struggle with someone not in custody. In consultation with his client the Lawyer asked, 'Have you accomplices?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the Burglar. 'I have two, but neither has been taken. I hired one to defend me against capture and you to defend me against conviction.'

This answer deeply impressed the Lawyer, and having ascertained that the Burglar had accumulated no money in his profession he threw up the case.

THE LIFESAVER

An Ancient Maiden, standing on the edge of a wharf near a modern Swain, was overheard rehearsing the words:

'Noble preserver! The life that you have saved is yours!'

Having repeated them several times with various intonations, she sprang into the water, where she was suffered to drown.

'I am a noble preserver,' said the Modern Swain, thoughtfully moving away; 'the life that I have saved is indeed mine.'

FROM THE MINUTES

An Orator afflicted with atrophy of the organ of commonsense rose in his place in the halls of legislation and pointed with pride to his Unblotted Escutcheon. Seeing what it supposed to be the finger of scorn pointed at it, the Unblotted Escutcheon turned black with rage. Seeing the Unblotted Escutcheon turning black with what he supposed to be the record of his own misdeeds showing through the whitewash, the Orator fell dead of mortification. Seeing the Orator fall dead of what they supposed to be atrophy of the organ of commonsense, his colleagues resolved that whenever they should adjourn because they were tired it should be out of

respect to the memory of him who had so frequently made them so.

THE FABULIST

An Illustrious Satirist was visiting a travelling menagerie with a view to collecting literary materials. As he was passing near the Elephant that animal said:

'How sad that so justly famous a censor should mar his work by ridicule of persons with pendulous noses – who are the salt of the earth!'

The Kangaroo said:

'I do so enjoy that great man's censure of the ridiculous – particularly his attacks on the proboscidæ ; but, alas! he has no reverence for the marsupials, and laughs at our way of carrying our young in a pouch.'

The Camel said:

'If he would only respect the Sacred Hump, he would be faultless. As it is, I can not permit his work to be read in the presence of my family.'

The Ostrich, seeing his approach, thrust her head into the straw, saying:

'If I do not conceal myself, he may be reminded to write something disagreeable about my lack of a crest, or my appetite for scrap-iron; and although he is inexpressibly brilliant when he devotes himself to ridicule of folly and greed, his dullness is matchless when he transcends the limits of legitimate comment.'

'That,' said the Buzzard to his mate, 'is the dis-

tinguished author of that glorious fable, "The Ostrich and the Keg of Raw Nails." I regret to add, that he wrote also, "The Buzzard's Feast," in which a carrion diet is the foundation of sound health. If nothing but corpses were eaten, death would be unknown.'

Seeing an attendant approaching, the Illustrious Satirist passed out of the tent and mingled with the crowd. It was afterward discovered that he had crept in under the canvas without paying.

A REVIVALIST REVIVED

A Revivalist who had fallen dead in the pulpit from too violent religious exercise was astonished to wake up in Hades. He promptly sent for the Adversary of Souls and demanded his freedom, explaining that he was entirely orthodox, and had always led a pious and holy life.

'That is all very true,' said the Adversary, 'but you taught by example that a verb should not agree with its subject in person and number, whereas the Good Book says that contention is worse than a dinner of herbs. You also tried to release the objective case from its thraldom to the preposition, and it is written that servants should obey their masters. You stay right here.'

THE DEBATERS

A Hurled-back Allegation which, after a brief rest,

had again started forth upon its mission of mischief, met an Inkstand in mid-air.

'How did the Honourable Member whom you represent know that I was coming again?' inquired the Hurled-back Allegation.

'He did not,' the Inkstand replied; 'he isn't at all forehanded at repartee.'

'Why, then, do you come, things being even when he had hurled me back?'

'He wanted to be a little ahead.'

TWO OF THE PIOUS

A Christian and a Heathen in His Blindness were disputing, when the Christian, with that charming consideration which serves to distinguish the truly pious from wolves that perish, exclaimed:

'If I could have my way I'd blow up all your gods with dynamite.'

'And if I could have mine,' retorted the Heathen in His Blindness, bitterly malevolent but oleaginously suave, 'I'd fan all yours out of the universe.'

THE DESPERATE OBJECT

A Dishonest Gain was driving in its luxurious carriage through its private park, when it saw something

which frantically and repeatedly ran against a stone wall, endeavouring to butt out its brains.

'Hold, hold! thou desperate Object,' cried the Dishonest Gain; 'these beautiful private grounds are no place for such work as thine.'

'True,' said the Object, pausing; 'I have other and better grounds for it.'

'Then thou art a happy man,' said the Dishonest Gain, 'and thy bleeding head is but mere dissembling. Who art thou, great actor?'

'I am known,' said the Object, dashing itself again at the wall, 'as the Consciousness of Duty Well Performed.'

THE MOURNING BROTHERS

Observing that he was about to die, an Old Man called his two Sons to his bedside and expounded the situation.

'My children,' said he, 'you have not shown me many marks of respect during my life, but you will attest your sorrow for my death. To him who the longer wears a weed upon his hat in memory of me shall go my entire fortune. I have made a will to that effect.'

So when the Old Man was dead each of the youths put a weed upon his hat and wore it until he was himself old, when, seeing that neither would give in, they agreed that the younger should leave off his weed and the elder give him half the estate. But when the elder

applied for the property he found that there had been an Executor!

Thus were hypocrisy and obstinacy fitly punished.

A NEEDLESS LABOUR

After waiting many a weary day to revenge himself upon a Lion for some unconsidered manifestation of contempt, a Skunk finally saw him coming and posting himself in the path ahead uttered the inaudible discord of his race. Observing that the Lion gave no attention to the matter, the Skunk, keeping carefully out of reach, said:

'Sir, I beg leave to point out that I have set on foot an implacable odour.'

'My dear fellow,' the Lion replied, 'you have taken a needless trouble; I already knew that you were not a rose.'

A FLOURISHING INDUSTRY

'Are the industries of this country in a flourishing condition?' asked a Traveller from a Foreign Land to the First Man he met in America.

'Splendid!' said the Man. 'I have more orders than I can fill.'

'What is your business?' the Traveller from a Foreign Land inquired.

The Man replied, 'I make boxing gloves for the tongues of pugilists.'

PATRIOT AND BANKER

A Patriot who had taken office poor and retired rich was introduced at a bank where he desired to open an account.

'With pleasure,' said the Honest Banker; 'we shall be glad to do business with you; but first you must make yourself an honest man by restoring what you stole from the Government.'

'Good heavens!' cried the Patriot; 'if I do that, I shall have nothing to deposit with you.'

'I don't see that,' the Honest Banker replied. 'We are not the whole American people.'

'Ah, I understand,' said the Patriot, musing. 'At what sum do you estimate this bank's proportion of the country's loss by me?'

About a dollar,' answered the Honest Banker.

And with a proud consciousness of serving his country wisely and well he charged that sum to the account.

THE APPROPRIATE MEMORIAL

A High Public Functionary having died, the citizens of his town held a meeting to consider how to honour his memory, and Another High Public Functionary rose and addressed the meeting.

'Mr. Chairman and Gintlemen,' said the Other, 'it

sames to me, and I'm hopin' yez wull approve the suggistion, that an appropriet way to honour the mimory of the decaised would be to erect an emolument sootably inscribed wid his vartues.'

The soul of the great man looked down from Heaven and wept.

A DEFECTIVE PETITION

An Associate Justice of the Supreme Court was sitting by a river when a Traveller approached and said:

'I wish to cross. Will it be lawful to use this boat?'

'It will,' was the reply; 'it is my boat.'

The Traveller thanked him, and pushing the boat into the water embarked and rowed away. But the boat sank and he was drowned.

'Heartless man!' said an Indignant Spectator. 'Why did you not tell him that your boat had a hole in it?'

'The matter of the boat's condition,' said the great jurist, 'was not brought before me.'

THE DISINTERESTED ARBITER

Two Dogs who had been fighting for a bone, without advantage to either, referred their dispute to a Sheep. The sheep patiently heard their statements, then flung the bone into a pond.

'Why did you do that?' said the Dogs.

'Because,' replied the Sheep, 'I am a vegetarian.'

THE REFORMED ANARCHIST

A famous Anarchist wrecked at sea was cast ashore upon the island of Gowqueechy, inhabited by the ancient and powerful tribe of Tumtums. He was found and taken before the Jamgrogrum, who asked him his political faith.

'We ask all strangers that,' the Jamgrogrum explained, 'in the hope that some day we shall hear of political principles that are superior to ours.'

'I am an Anarchist,' answered the stranger; 'I hold that all government is wicked, all laws are oppressive. I teach that all Jamgrogra should be assassinated.'

The monarch called his Prime Minister to his side and giving him some whispered instructions retired.

The next day, when the Prime Minister had presented himself at the palace and had eaten a handful of clay, as court etiquette required, he was asked by the Jamgrogrum for news of the Anarchist.

'May your Majesty's tomb stand forever,' said the Prime Minister. 'I had him taken to the baths and carefully washed all over.'

'Well?'

'When asked, according to your Majesty's instructions, if he were still an Anarchist, he replied that no treatment, however harsh and cruel, could alter his convictions.'

'Indeed,' exclaimed the Jamgrogrum, with the dejected air of one deprived of a cherished illusion, 'then my theory of the unity of dirt and anarchism is overthrown.'

'No, your Majesty,' said the Prime Minister; 'he died ten minutes after the bath.'

TWO SONS

A Man had Two Sons. The elder was virtuous and dutiful, the younger wicked and crafty. When the father was about to die, he called them before him and said: 'I have only two things of value – my herd of camels and my blessing. How shall I allot them?'

'Give to me,' said the Younger Son, 'thy blessing, for it may reform me. The camels I should be sure to sell and squander the money.'

The Elder Son, disguising his joy, said that he would try to be content with the camels and a pious mind.

It was so arranged and the Man died. Then the wicked Younger Son went before the Cadi and said: 'Behold, my brother has defrauded me of my lawful heritage. He is so bad that our father, as is well known, denied him his blessing; is it likely that he gave him the camels?'

So the Elder Son was compelled to give up the herd and was soundly bastinadoed for his rapacity.

THE FORTUNATE EXPLORER

An Emissary from the President of the United States to the Emperor of Abyssinia was taking leave of that sovereign, who, to attest his regret according to the custom of his country, let fall a flood of tears.

'My fame is assured,' said the Emissary; 'I have discovered the source of the Nile.'

THE DUTIFUL SON

A Millionaire who had gone to an almshouse to visit his father met a Neighbour there, who was greatly surprised.

'What!' said the Neighbour, 'you do sometimes visit your father?'

'If our situations were reversed,' said the Millionaire, 'I am sure he would visit me. The old man has always been rather proud of me. Besides,' he added softly, 'I had to have his signature; I am insuring his life.'

WIDOW AND SOLDIER

A Widow whose husband had been hanged in chains was keeping vigil by the corpse the first night and tearfully beseeching the Sentinel who guarded it to let her steal it.

'Madam,' he said, 'I can no longer resist your entreaties; your beauty overcomes my sense of duty. I will deliver the body to you and take its place in the cage, where a stroke of my dagger will baffle justice and give me the happiness of dying for so lovely a lady.'

'No,' said the lady, 'I cannot consent to the sacrifice of so noble a life. If indeed you look upon me with favour, assist me and my servants to remove the sacred object to my château, where you shall remain in concealment until we can escape from the country.'

'Nay,' said the Sentinel, 'I should surely be discovered and torn from your arms. In three days you can claim the body of your beloved husband; then you can confer upon an honourable soldier such happiness and distinction as you may think his devotion merits.'

'Three days!' the lady exclaimed. 'That is long for waiting and short for flight. If unencumbered we may reach the frontier. Already the day begins to break – let us leave the body and set out.'

A NIGGARDLY OFFER

Two Soldiers lay dead upon the field of honour.

'What would you give to be alive again?' one asked the other.

'To the enemy, victory,' was the reply, 'to my country, a long life of disinterested service as a civilian. What would you give?'

'The plaudits of my countrymen.'

'You are a pretty tight-fisted bargainer,' said the other.

DIPLOMACY

'If you do not submit my claim to arbitration,' wrote the President of Omohu to the President of Modugy, 'I shall take immediate steps to collect it in my own way.'

'Sir,' replied the President of Modugy, 'you may go to the devil with your threat of war.'

'My great and good friend,' wrote the other, 'you mistake the character of my communication. It is an antepenultimatum.'

TWO SCEPTICS

Some heathens whose Idol was greatly weatherworn threw it into a river, and erecting a new one, engaged in public worship at its base.

'What is this all about?' inquired the New Idol.

'Father of Joy and Gore,' said the High Priest, 'be patient and I will instruct you in the doctrines and rites of our holy religion.'

A year later, after a course of study in theology, the Idol asked to be thrown into the river, declaring himself an atheist.

'Do not let that trouble you,' said the High Priest – 'so am I.'

A FAULTY PERFORMANCE

A pet Opossum belonging to a Great Critic stole his favourite kitten and was about to kill and eat it when she saw him approaching, and fearing detection she concealed it in her pouch.

'Well, my pretty one,' said the Great Critic, with condescension, 'what new charms and graces have you today?'

Before she could reply the kitten set up a diligent and persistent mewing. When at last the music had ceased the Opossum said:

'I've been dabbling a little in mimicry and ventriloquism; I thought it would please you, sir.'

'The desire to please is ever pleasing,' the Great Critic answered, not without a touch of professional dignity, 'but you have much to learn about the mewing of kittens.'

AFTERMATH

'What is that great convulsion of nature?' Neptune asked, turning one ear upward toward the surface of the sea.

'That, sir,' replied a Triton, 'is a furious engagement by the heroes of the Senegambian Navy.'

'So soon again?' said the sea god in surprise. 'And whom, pray, are they fighting this time?'

'One another,' the Triton explained. 'They have fallen out over their recent exploit in sinking the Timbuctonese fleet.'

Neptune rose from his couch of coral and paced the ocean's floor with the nervous, irregular strides of one in anger. 'See here!' he thundered, 'we can't have this kind of thing! When I saw those squadrons fighting I felt that trouble would come of it. A sea fight is pretty to look at, and the music of guns lulls like the evensong of a mermaid in the gloaming, but always the entertainment is prelude to a savage and insupportable uproar among the victors. The next time you see sailors fighting at sea please prevent a disagreeable result by sinking both fleets.'

THE PLAUDITS OF THE PEOPLE

A Man who had been mentioned for high political preferment explained through the newspapers that he was 'not a candidate.' Thereupon he was lustily cheered by the populace.

'Why do you not cheer?' someone asked a Silent Person standing moodily apart.

'Because,' answered the Silent Person, 'I understand these plaudits to be given for his humility. Whenever you raise the shout for his knowledge of the English language you can count on the assistance of both my lungs.'

'Why, how is that?' asked those who stood nearest.

'A "candidate" is one who has been nominated,' said the Silent Person. 'He has not succeeded, as yet, in moving Heaven and Earth sufficiently to procure that distinction.'

A HALF LOAF

Having found the Enemy's fleet in a harbour, the Scourge of the Seas sank a collier in the narrow entrance; and then from his cavernous helmet his merriment rang out over the waters like laughter from a tomb.

'Why this unseemly glee?' the Enemy signalled. 'The hulk prevents my coming out.'

'I know that, alas!' the Scourge wig-wagged back; 'but it prevents my going in. That is better than no bread.'

BY THE RIVER MARGE

Seeing a Politician taking a bath an Observer, curious as to the singular habits of the lower animals, exclaimed:

'What! Is nothing left for you to take more valuable than that? Why do you do this thing?'

'I have been in the hands of my friends,' replied the Politician.

'Then I should suggest skinning,' the Observer said.

'My friend, you are late: somebody suggested it to *them*. I am cleaning the finger marks off my bones.'

THE MAIN THING

A Poet proffering his work to an Editor said:

'This is a small poem, but quality is the main thing.'

Having read it the Editor put it into a drawer and handing the Poet a ten-cent piece said:

'This is a smallish coin, but I am so bold as to hope that you will be pleased with its purity. It is nearly all silver.'

THE INCREDULOUS SUBORDINATE

A Commanding General, retreating after defeat, came upon the camp of a Subordinate, who was playing cards with his men.

'Why did you not march to my assistance, sir?' thundered the Commanding General. 'Did you not hear the reports of my guns?'

'Reports? Oh, yes,' the Subordinate replied. 'I heard them all right, but I did not believe them. I used to be a reporter.'

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

Having been told by an angel that Noureddin Becar was the happiest man in the world, the Sultan caused him to be brought to the palace and said:

'Impart to me, I command thee, the secret of thy happiness.'

'O father of the sun and the moon,' answered Noureddin Becar, 'I did not know that I was happy.'

'That,' said the Sultan, 'is the secret that I sought.'

Noureddin Becar retired in deep dejection, fearing that his new-found happiness might forsake him.

ATONEMENT

Two Women in heaven claimed one Man newly arrived.

'I was his wife,' said one.

'I his sweetheart,' said the other.

St. Peter said to the Man: 'Go down to the Other Place – you have suffered enough.'

A PART OF THE WAGES

'Ours is a life of self-sacrifice,' said a Clergyman. 'While others pursue gain or pleasure we burn the midnight oil in studying how to crack the hardest theological nuts. And all for what earthly reward?'

'Well,' said his Parishioner, thoughtfully, 'there are, for example, the kernels.'

TWO PARROTS

An Author who had made a fortune by writing slang had a Parrot.

'Why have I not a gold cage?' asked the bird.

'Because,' said its master, 'you are a better thinker than repeater, as your question shows. And we have not the same audience.'

TWIN INTOLERABLES

A Rattlesnake observing the approach of a Man with a Camera crept under a flat stone, leaving nothing exposed but the tip of his nose.

'I was not going to photograph you,' the Man with a Camera explained with a touch of sadness in his voice. 'Holding the ancient faith in the divine wisdom of serpents, I have come to ask you why I am hated and shunned by all mankind.'

'Alas,' said the Rattlesnake, 'the gods have denied me that knowledge. Can you tell me why I am myself not very much sought after as a companion?'

CONSOLATION

A great country having vindicated its courage and prowess by fifteen defeats in which none of its enemy's troops suffered any damage, its Prime Minister sued for peace.

'I'll not be hard on you,' said the Victor: 'you shall keep everything except your colonies, your liberty, your credit and your self-respect.'

'Ah,' said the Prime Minister, 'you are indeed magnanimous; you leave us our honour.'

FAMINE VERSUS PESTILENCE

'It is hard on you, my gallant friend,' said the Victorious Besieger, 'but I must say it. Pestilence was among my troops, and if you had not surrendered to me I should have surrendered to you.'

'That is what I feared you would do,' replied the Vanquished Commander. 'My men were eating their belts and cartridge boxes; we could not properly provide for you.'

THE MONARCHIST RECLAIMED

A recreant Citizen of a Great Republic went abroad, hoping to shine in 'the fierce light that beats upon a throne.' While intriguing to be presented at the court of a fly-speck principality, he fell asleep and dreamed that he was visited by an Angel wearing the robes of a lord high chamberlain.

'Come,' said the Angel; 'I will present you to all the crowned heads of Europe.'

Miraculously conveyed through the air, they arrived at the portal of a vast building. The visitor's name and his rank in the order of the Dukes of Trade were announced, the great iron doors swung open and he

found himself in the presence of all the crowned heads of Europe. The bodies had been carted away by the public scavenger.

The royal pageant so disappointed him that he awoke with a sigh, and returning to the land of the free, he plunged into patriotism, became a leader of the Mobocratic party and died an illustrious statesman with both hands in the public treasury.

SAINT AND SOUL

St. Peter was sitting at the gate of Heaven when a Soul approached, and, bowing civilly, handed him its card.

'I am very sorry, sir,' said St. Peter, after reading the card, 'but I really cannot admit you. You will have to go to the Other Place. Sorry, sir, very sorry.'

'Don't mention it,' said the Soul; 'I have been all the month at a watering-place, and it will be an agreeable change. I called only to ask if my friend Elihu Root is here.'

'No, sir,' the Saint replied; 'Mr. Root is not dead.'

'Oh, I know that,' said the Soul. 'I thought he might be visiting God.'

THE STATUE AT BUMBOOGLE

On a high hill overlooking the ancient city of Bumboogle is a colossal statue, erected by the nation, to the

memory of the illustrious Gaaka-Wolwol, 'the best and wisest of mankind.' A Traveller from a distant country said to the Custodian of the Statue, who is the highest of the realm: 'The winds of the sea, O Most Exalted, have not blown the fame of your great countryman to my native shores. What did he do?'

'Nothing; that is how we know him to have been good.'

'But his wisdom – what did he say?'

'Nothing; that is how we know him to have been wise.'

IMPROVIDENCE

A Person who had fallen from wealth to indigence appealed to a Rich Man for alms.

'No,' said the Rich Man, 'you did not keep what you had. What assurance have I that you will keep what I may give you?'

'But I don't want it to keep,' the beggar explained; 'I want to exchange it for bread.'

'That is just the same,' said the Rich Man. 'You would not keep the bread.'

SHEEP AND LION

'You are a beast of war,' said the Sheep to the Lion, 'yet men go gunning for you. Me, a believer in non-resistance, they do not hunt.'

'They do not need to,' replied the son of the desert, 'they can breed you.'

THE INCONSOLABLE WIDOW

A Woman in widow's weeds was weeping upon a grave.

'Console yourself, madam,' said a Sympathetic Stranger. 'Heaven's mercies are infinite. There is another man somewhere, besides your husband, with whom you can still be happy.'

'There was,' she sobbed – 'there was, but this is his grave.'

AN INTRUSION

Morality put her toe into international politics and it was promptly chopped off.

'A thousand thanks,' said Diplomacy, with an engaging bow; 'we will keep it in memory of a most distinguished honour.'

And Morality has limped a little ever since.

THE TOLERANT SOVEREIGN

The Gamdoodle of Moop summoned his Secretary of War to an audience and said:

'Sir, you cannot be unaware of the great outcry that my loyal subjects are making against you. They say that you are a rascal.'

'Your Majesty,' replied the Secretary of War, 'it is untrue.'

'I'm right glad to hear it,' the Gamdoodle replied, rising to intimate that the interview was at an end. But observing that the official did not depart, he added: 'Is there anything to say?'

'Yes, your Majesty,' the Secretary of War answered; 'I wish to surrender my portfolio; for while the public outcry is untrue it is not unjust. I am a fool.'

At this the Gamdoodle was graciously pleased to smile. 'My good man,' he said, 'return to your duties. I am that way myself.'

THE MYSTERIOUS WORD

The Chief of a battalion of war correspondents read a manuscript account of a battle.

My son,' he said to its Author, 'your story is distinctly unavailable. You say we lost only two men instead of a hundred; that the enemy's loss is unknown, instead of ten thousand, and that we were defeated and ran away. That is no way to write.'

'But consider,' expostulated the conscientious scribe, 'my story may be tame with regard to the number of our casualties, disappointing as to the damage done to the enemy and shocking in its denouement, but it has the advantage of being the truth.'

'I don't quite understand,' said the Chief, scratching his head.

'Why, the advantage,' the other exclaimed – 'the merit – the distinction – the profitable excellence – the – '

'Oh,' said the Chief, 'I know very well the signification of "advantage"; but what the devil do you mean by "truth"?'

A BORN CAPTAIN

A Near-Sighted Man in Luzon met one day a Gorgeous Being whom he mistook for the American Commander.

'General,' he said, 'do you not find the United States volunteers difficult to manage?'

'I might,' the Gorgeous Being replied, 'if I were their commander; but, no, I am Aguinaldo.'

REVELATION

A Lion was attacked by a pack of famishing Wolves, who circled about him, howling as loud as they could, though none dared approach him.

'These are very useful creatures,' said the Lion, as he lay down for his afternoon nap – 'they apprise me of my virtues. I never before knew that I was good to eat.'

SOLDIER AND VULTURE

A Soldier struggling through a pestilential morass saw a Vulture perching on the branch of a tree and solemnly snapping its beak.

'What are you?' asked the Soldier, who had never seen a Vulture. 'You look like the father of all chickens.'

'Men call me all kinds of names,' the bird replied, 'according to the language that they speak. I call myself an Expansionist.'

The Soldier grew very grave. 'I was that myself until now,' he said, 'but if you are the thing to be expanded I shall have to think about it.'

But when he tried he found that heaven had not supplied him with a thinker.

HER HONOUR THE MAYOR

A statesman running for Office had the bad luck to fall and break his heart. As he lay bewailing his hard fate the Office of which he had been in pursuit came back to him, keeping just out of reach.

'My poor friend,' said the Office, 'what was your business with me?'

'I wanted to hold you,' the sufferer explained.

'I should think,' the Office said, reproachfully, 'that

it would be much easier to go home and hold the baby.'

'Alas,' said the unfortunate Statesman, 'my home is in Colorado and my wife is Mayor of Maverick – there is no baby.'

IN ADVANCE OF HIS TIME

Some rowdies, having savagely beaten an Unoffending Person, were haled before a Judge and prosecuted by their victim. 'I seem to remember you,' said the Judge to the prosecuting witness. 'Did you not make a speech on a street corner recently, denouncing law and tyranny?'

'I did, your Honour.'

'The very law to which you now appeal for protection?'

'Yes, your Honour, I hate all law.'

'In short, you are an anarchist, are you not?'

'Yes, I am – but not a bigoted one.'

'Well, I am not a bigoted enforcer of the law. The prisoners are discharged, and I invite attention to the fact that you are without standing in this court.'

Soon after the Judge was removed from office, respected by all who knew him.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

A thirteen-inch gun having uttered a projectile relapsed into silence. Then sounded a Far, Faint

Voice from beyond the earth's curvature: 'Did you damage anything?'

'Did I damage anything?' echoed the portentous tube right scornfully. 'If you are envious enough about that to investigate you will find a wide and ragged hole in the public treasury.'

'Ah, permit me to introduce myself,' said the Far, Faint Voice: 'I am that hole. It is a wise child that knows its father – I had supposed myself due to the annual salary warrant of a Rear-Admiral.'

THE UNSHREWD ASSASSIN

A convicted Murderer whom a Sheriff was engaged in hanging was asked if he had anything to say.

'Will it do me any good,' he inquired, 'to say something?'

'That,' replied the Sheriff, adjusting the noose, 'depends somewhat upon what you say. I thought you might perhaps put yourself into an easier frame of mind by damning the District Attorney.'

'How much does he owe you?' the Murderer asked.

'You are not so shrewd as you think yourself,' the Sheriff said; 'I owe him fifty dollars.'

'It is pretty much the same thing,' said the Murderer.

'It is altogether the same thing,' the Sheriff assented, springing the drop – 'to you.'

ENVIRONMENT

'Prisoner,' said the Judge, austerely, 'you are justly convicted of murder. Are you guilty, or were you brought up in Kentucky?'

A CHAINED EAGLE

A Provincial Statesman newly elected to the parliament of Despotamia declared that he would introduce a resolution censuring the king. As he left the parliament house, he met a Stranger who warned him that if he persisted in his disloyal design he would lose his head.

'That,' said he, 'would be a smaller privation than the loss of my liberty.'

'I do not know that,' said the Stranger. 'Liberty is something that I cannot rightly appraise, never having had it. I am the king.'

THE POWERLESS POET

A Poet whose lines never would scan was summoned before the King and commanded to show cause why he should not be put to death.

'If your ear is imperfect,' said the King, 'you could count your syllables on your fingers, like an honest workman.'

'May your Majesty outlive your Prime Minister by as many years as remain to you,' said the Poet reverently. 'I do count my syllables. But observe: my left hand lacks a finger – bitten off by a critic.'

'Then,' said the King, 'why don't you count on the right hand?'

'Alas!' was the reply of the Poet, as he held up the mutilated left, 'that is impossible – there is nothing to count with! It is the forefinger that is lacking.'

'Unfortunate man!' exclaimed the sympathetic monarch. 'We must make your limitations and disabilities immaterial. You shall write for the magazines.'

FROM GENERAL TO PARTICULAR

A Man of Candour said to his wife; 'I cannot permit you to think me better than I am. I have many vices and weaknesses.'

'That is only natural,' said she, smiling sweetly; 'none of us is perfect.'

Encouraged by her magnanimity, he confessed to a particular falsehood that he had once told her.

'Abominable wretch!' she cried, and clapped her hands thrice.

Thereupon a gigantic Nubian slave appeared and dispatched him with a scimitar.

DISAPPOINTMENT

A Dog that had been engaged in pursuit of his own tail abandoned the chase and lying down curled up for repose. In his new posture he found his tail within easy reach of his teeth and seized it with avidity, but immediately released it, wincing with pain.

'After all,' he said, 'there is more joy in pursuit than in possession.'

THE MERCIFUL ASPIRANT

A Person who had been made President was walking along a lonely road when he met an Aspirant to Office and called loudly for help. But nobody heard except the Aspirant, who said:

'I have here seven hundred and fifty recommendations for my appointment as National Inspector of Dead Dogs.'

The President fell upon his knees and explained that he had a wife and twenty-nine small children. The Aspirant put away the papers, taking some more from another pocket.

'These documents,' he said, 'are affidavits of my neighbours; they attest my fitness for the office.'

The President wrung his hands and wept audibly. He said:

'Eight Cabinet officers are dependent on me for their bread, and most of them are orphans.'

The heart of the Aspirant to office was touched at last.

'I spare you,' he said, putting away his papers and moving on, 'for the sake of those who cannot. Keep your National Inspectorship of Dead Dogs. It shall not be said that I am a hard man to deal with.'

The President rose and dusted his knees. 'I could not have given it him without breaking my word,' he said to himself. 'I have promised it to sixteen others.'

A DISCOMFITED PHILOSOPHER

The King of Remotia had a favourite Philosopher to whom he said:

'Thou hast been so faithful a slave that I am desirous to reward thee. Ask of me anything that thou wouldst have.'

'Give me,' said the Philosopher, 'a hair from the head of a man that hath never flattered thee.'

The King promised and dismissed him. The next day he summoned him before the throne and handed him a hair.

'Thou art attempting to deceive me,' said the Philosopher, carefully scrutinising the gift. 'This hair is from the head of a flatterer who assured thee that he would think it an honour to give thee his head also.'

'Thou art not so astute as thou thinkest,' the King replied. 'That hair is from the head of the only deaf mute in my kingdom.'

A MONARCH FOREARMED

The Emperor of Jiam being dissatisfied with himself resolved to make war upon the King of Geylon.

'You'd better not,' said the King.

'Why not?' the Emperor inquired, contemputously – 'in my realm every man is a soldier. '

'That is why not,' the King explained. 'In mine every other man is a civilian.'

Perceiving that in peace the King had prepared for war, the bellicose Emperor prudently sought a more military antagonist.

WOLF AND TORTOISE

A Wolf meeting a Tortoise said: 'My friend, you are the slowest thing out of doors. I do not see how you manage to escape from your enemies.'

'As I lack the power to run away,' replied the Tortoise, 'Providence has thoughtfully supplied me with an impenetrable shell.'

The Wolf reflected a long time, then he said:

'It seems to me that it would have been just as easy to give you long legs.'

A CONDITION PRECEDENT

The King of Dogs was petitioned by one of his subjects, a reformer, to command that strangers when meeting should treat one another with amity and forbearance. He issued a royal rescript to that effect and ordered the Petitioner to cry it through the world; but whenever the herald appeared he was set upon by the dogs of the locality and cruelly bitten before he could perform his duty.

'Alas!' he said, 'I perceive that reform must be preceded by reformation.

THE AMBITIOUS STATESMAN

A Man Out of Office applied for relief to the King of the Quakers.

'What can you do?' his Majesty asked.

'I have been a Secretary of War,' the Man Out of Office replied, 'but I was deposed. That position in your Majesty's Cabinet would, I think, be filled by me very creditably.'

The King being greatly pleased by the applicant's manner and appearance, walked across the audience hall to his Prime Minister.

'Tell me how to make a vacancy in the Cabinet,' he said.

'Appoint one,' said the Prime Minister. 'And permit me, Sire, to recommend the one with whom you have just been speaking.'

THE LIMIT

The King of the Faraway Islands appointed his horse prime minister and rode a man. Observing that under the new order of things the realm prospered, an Aged Statesman advised the king to turn himself out to grass and put an ox upon the throne.

'No,' said the soverign, thoughtfully, 'a good principle may be pushed to an injurious extreme. True reform stops short of revolution.'

AS USUAL

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